LONDON CELLO SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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Liberated from the Bass Line

• *David Watkin*

David Watkin

Isadora Duncan is supposed to have asked George Bernard Shaw "would it not be wonderful if we could have a child who had your brains and my beauty?" "Yes," he is supposed to have replied, "but supposing it had your brains and my beauty." In the same way Bach's Cello Suites require the right combination of ingredients in a marriage of opposing qualities. But what are they? In what must be a pun, perhaps during his short spell in prison, Bach titles the 6 Violin Sonatas and Partitas *Sei Solo*. Not "Six Solos" *(Sei Soli)* but "I am alone". But are they really pieces for a "soloist" to play?

Margaret Campbell's *The Great Cellists* like many similar books, is really a history of "great" soloists. Each chapter concludes that this particular cellist "advanced the cello's technique" and helped the cello to be "liberated from the bass line". We are left looking back through the wrong end of a telescope wondering why Bach – the ultimate practical musician —would have written these pieces at all, given that the state of cello playing must have been so inadequate. Like good Bach players, journalists look for a narrative to string their ideas together. But this "metanarrative" of progress, with its fixation on soloists and their repertoire, leaves important questions unanswered. How did the majority of cellists who were not soloists accompany? Might a good preparation for the Bach Suites be the bass lines of his Passions, Cantatas, Motets and Masses, rather than the solo repertoire of subsequent generations? This pigeonholing has long meant that young musicians aspire to be either "bullet-proof soloists" or cognoscenti of late Beethoven Quartets—either action heroes or Shakespeareans. Shaw, the critic, would warn against Schwarzenegger's *Hamlet* or Gielgud's *Terminator*.

Accompanying Bach's choral works you get a sense of just how important harmony is to his word setting. Sometimes we hear him engaging in a theological dialogue by stressing a particular word. Sometimes he clearly differentiates between his intoning of Latin texts and his inflecting of German. But always, it is the performer's way of relating to Bach's management of harmonic tension, the ebb and flow of dissonance across large and small scales, which colours

their performances. Crucially for us, harmony also intersects with dance, elements of which are almost omnipresent in Bach's music. There are myriad styles of dance, but all dancers, unless they are astronauts, are subject to the laws of gravity—*elevé, plié*. In dance music this rise and fall, lift, ebb and flow, momentum, pulse, swing - the difficult-to-describe 'sense of dance'—all exist in this harmonic dimension and depend on the performer's engagement with it. Some scholars argue that we must not make the mistake of using language or concepts to describe harmony that are alien to Bach's age, "Historically Informed Theory". I would argue that, nevertheless performers need to use whatever skills we currently have to perceive the music we perform. Perhaps even Mark Morris's choreography for YoYo Ma's 3rd Suite *Falling Down Stairs* is as valid an analysis as any.

Bach's choral music is good practice for the Suites because, whatever scale of forces he employs, the same musical archetypes and harmonic gestures abound in his music. We shouldn't be surprised, for instance, that a Chorale has been "discovered" in the simple repetitive harmonic structure of the *Ciaconna*. Bach scholar and performer John Butt summed up this transferability in a rehearsal of the *B Minor Mass*, saying to the orchestra: "YOU carry the music's meaning—the choir just have the subtitles." Like the players in Mozart's pit, they are neither 'soloist' nor 'accompanist', but central to the drama.

Because pre-twentieth century musicians mostly played contemporary music, their fluency in the style of their own epoch transcended all genres. In a sense, their specialisation ran perpendicular to twentieth-century musicians, who have tended to play all styles in one seat. Mendelssohn's friend Ferdinand David is a good example: as well as being a "soloist", helping him write the Violin Concerto, he played the Quartets and led the *Gewandhaus* Orchestra playing his Symphonies, Oratorios and no doubt his Bach revivals. He also taught—the ultimate 'portfolio' career, perhaps. (In fact David also published a lot of "old music".)

A simple example of this harmonic priority in Bach is how players handle chords. The "soloist" who says "I play melodies and sometimes accompany myself" tends to place the top of the chords on the beat, where their own musical focus is drawn. Then the bass line is awkwardly squeezed in wherever and however possible—before the beat. This problem is dealt with on day one of keyboard continuo school. For the continuo cellist it means playing the bass line on the beat – the bass line carries the pulse - and trusting that the ear will supply the other notes of the chord as they arise. For Anner Bylsma this is not simply a question of 'before or after' but is more nuanced, like the angles required to produce the effect of perspective on a flat piece of paper.

"How slowly can I play my *Sarabande*?" asks a student provocatively, knowing what an "Early Music" response might be "…only I want it to be very expressive." I answer, equally provocatively "As slowly as possible". But I qualify this with one thing – the two chords in each bar must nevertheless exist in relation to each other. When you pull two magnets apart, at a certain point they cease to have any influence on one another. In the same way the influence of two chords on each other exists in time – too long a gap and they become meaningless. In John Donne's image of "gold to airy thinness beat" that thread of connection can be one atom thick, but it must be present, "not yet a breach, but an expansion". Otherwise those two chords are no longer "articulated"—discrete but connected—they become simply two separate events.

"Articulate", in all its forms, is a useful word for us. The joints of our limbs work because they connect the bones yet allow articulation. In speech we articulate the flow of air through our mouths to form sounds. If we express ourselves well, then we are "articulate". To do this our words need to be independently recognisable yet also connected in a flow, making a sentence. The relative proportions of groups of words or phrases give further, deeper meaning to what we say. This connecting of separate things is an important act in music. The elements of a sequence for example need to be both clearly defined and connected. The rhetorical figures that are part of Bach's language, can be nuanced across a large structure: not a tyranny where a figure always has to be played the same way, but like the leaves of an oak tree, no two are identical, but each one is recognisably an oak leaf. Cadences plot proportions across large structures—if we can connect them in our performance we draw the listener in to a new level. 'Decoration' now has a connotation of frivolity—not so for Bach. For him *decoratio*, whether French, Italian or *figuren*, was too important to leave to improvisation. Hence the trouble he went to, painstakingly writing in as he went along the slurs which "articulate" those ideas. For the performer the challenge is to see the intricate relation between slurs and decoration, and then the relation between decorations and structural

weight-bearing notes. Bach's articulation marks literally 'articulate' his thoughts.

To return to the acting metaphor, the actor keeps in mind the delicate but vital thread of transmission that runs through their work and ours: author – text – actor – audience. Their mantra: "It's not all about you!" The same desire to connect with and hopefully communicate something that transcends ourselves motivates them. John Butt perhaps surprisingly elevates the performer's input to a very high level. Rather than having a quasi-religious primacy, the text is only the "dry residue" left at the bottom of a glass of water that's been left in the sun. Our job is to rehydrate it with our spirit. As oboist Michael Nieseman put it in an English Baroque Soloists rehearsal "I have to feel free to improvise even if I don't add anything." Yet listening to countless examples of Bach pressed into service to evaluate musicians, in exams, competitions and auditions, one sometimes hears two extremes. Some, who dare not risk breaching any of the perceived "rules" that seem to hold sway, risk giving a characterless read through. For others, a wilful ignorance of the music's context risks eccentricities and individuality for its own sake. Either can rob the music of its possible meaning.

David Watkin's new CD of the Bach Solo Suites is available to buy or download from www.resonusclassics.com

Of Special Interest

An American in Manchester

Newsletter editor Amy Jolly catches up with Nick Trygstad over a large piece of cake at the Sage Gateshead.

Tell us about yourself!

• I started learning the cello aged 4 in the hope that my family could play string quartets. I only really started to love music when i was 13, after discovering Bach's concerto for oboe and violin. I never really made the choice to pursue a career as a musician, I just couldn't imagine not learning the cello. I came to Manchester in 1998 to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Hannah Roberts and Ralph Kirshbaum. I'm just finishing my tenth year as principal cello of the Hallé Orchestra and I've been teaching for 6 years at the Royal Northern College of Music.

I can tell from that accent that you're not a true northerner! What brought you over here?

• At the end of high school in Minnesota I took a trip to meet a few teachers on the east coast of America. My teacher at the time, Peter Howard, had played chamber music with Ralph Kirshbaum and somehow knew that he was the right teacher for me. I went out east and played to about four different teachers, but it was the lesson with Ralph that was completely outstanding. Even though he didn't have room for me that year (he only took one student that year—the brilliant Marie Bittloch), I knew that Manchester would be the right place for me to develop.

Can you describe what made Ralph's lesson so exceptional?

• I was asked this question in a panel discussion with Ralph, Hannah Roberts, Philip Higham and Emma Ferrand, some of his former students who teach at the RNCM. As I reflected on that lesson, it struck me that Ralph had asked a lot of questions—questions that I didn't know existed, questions I didn't know were there to be asked. It's a bit like Socrates – he used to teach by asking questions. Ralph's questions didn't necessarily have definitive answers. In music you don't always need to have an answer. There are a lot of people, especially music students and some orchestral musicians, who want answers. Occasionally when a conductor talks in flowery metaphors, somebody will just ask whether they want it faster or slower, louder or softer. But of course that is far too simplistic. It's the same in a lesson: just the fact that you know there's a question, a choice, is enough. You can explore various answers, but there probably isn't one answer. So if I would return to something as a guiding principal for teaching, it would be this:. Think critically, ask questions and come up with multiple answers. The answer will change depending on your mood – live music exists in the moment and needs to respond to the circumstances. If we know there is a question, we are more likely to find a suitable answer for the time and place we are in.

So you had two teachers over here?

• I started with Hannah Roberts and at the end of my third year Ralph approached Hannah and asked if he

Nick Trygstad

could also teach me. So in my fourth year, I was meant to have half of each, but in reality I had more than full-time Hannah and quite a lot of Ralph as well!

So how soon after college was it that you joined the Hallé?

• I finished in June 2004 having done my postgrad with Ralph, and I got my job in the Hallé about a year later. I was fortunate that many principal cello jobs seemed to be vacant at the time. I took a job with Scottish Opera for 3 months but the Hallé had struggled to find a principal cello and approached me via Ralph! Mark *[Elder—Music Director of the Hallé]* was walking though the Royal Northern, bumped into Ralph and asked for recommendations. Ralph mentioned my name and it so happened that I had an upcoming evening recital at RNCM attended by a member of the Hallé cello section. After hearing the recital, he recommended me. I was booked for a week with Mark. After that week they booked me for another concert with Mark. On the day of the concert I did an audition at Bridgewater Hall and they offered me the job that evening.

So you DID audition!

• I did! I played just about every solo they could think of for the members of the cello section, Lyn *(the leader)*, Mark, Tim *(principal viola)* and Roberto *(principal bass)*. Mark accompanied me in the Haydn D major concerto, which was special! So I did a week and 2 days and they offered me the job.

That must be some kind of record.

• It's close probably!

But how was it going straight from college into a job?

• It was difficult. For a long time, I didn't feel that I deserved it and I regretted I didn't have the opportunity to participate in training opportunities that are available at the orchestral academies in Europe, such as Concertgebouw or Berlin. In the end it was a case of learning on the job. Mark has been a mentor to me, both musically as well as helping me to lead a section.

When I joined the section it hadn't had a leader for several years and while everyone wanted to improve, there was understandably a lack of focus and a lack of direction. My style of leadership is about consensus and mutual respect. I speak to people with respect as if they want to be there. Occasionally principals can treat their sections like dirt, giving the impression that they're worthless. Over the years we've become much better as a section and it's a happy section that values each other as both people and musicians. In the Hallé I can just use an image for the section and instantly get a result because they already know the sort of sound I'm looking for. Choosing when to say things is always a challenge—when to use verbal and non-verbal cues. I rarely use words if I can get away with it—the conductors talk far too much anyway!

So, the Hallé must take up a lot of your time and energy. Why do you still have a class at college?

• I have 6 students. It's not a big class, though it's bigger than it should be. When I was trying to decide what I wanted to do with my life, I pursued music because I wanted to be a cello teacher. I've always had great teachers from the time I began at the age of 4. I went to college to learn the discipline of music and to enjoy the challenge of cello. It's something I've always done my entire life so I just assumed I would continue working with other people on that discipline. I enjoy the connection with each individual student and learning to think about things in a different way. Without trying to sound negative, an orchestra is a very one-way organisation: the conductor tells you what to do and you do it. There are some teacher-pupil relationships that are also one-way and I have absolutely no interest in that. I would be more interested in a relationship where you learn from each other, in fact I'm sure I've learnt more from my students than they have from me over the years. I get a deeper understanding of how to play—I learn what I learned when I was studying. Without teaching you don't really understand anything. I'd like to develop my career further in this area. It's partly about the repertoire you get to engage with. I enjoy teaching orchestral excerpts just as much – how to get the music to the carry through the organised chaos of an orchestra.

What about Schumann – you played his Concerto 4 (5?!) times earlier this year with the Hallé—how was that?

• Well, it's always a great honour to be asked to play with the orchestra. The second year I played Haydn C and the next year I did Beethoven Triple which was a huge challenge. We had just been on tour so I avoided the flights by taking trains a couple of times and stayed a couple of extra nights in Vienna to practice. Likewise with Schumann, which came at the end of the Christmas holidays and a tour to Europe, and what with my kids and teaching, I just had to be incredibly disciplined, already

laying the groundwork over the summer. I had lessons with Hannah and David Watkin and I performed the string quartet version by Anssi Karttunen. Schumann made an arrangement for quartet and solo cello in an attempt to persuade one of the cellists he approached to play it. He made an arrangement for Joachim on the violin but he didn't want to play it either. The publishers didn't want the arrangement. It was really great to wear a different hat with the orchestra. It's so much easier to play a big solo like that than it is to play a short solo from within the orchestra-- that 7 note solo in The Planets is infinitely more terrifying than playing the whole Schumann Concerto because you walk out on the platform as a very different person and you don't have to emerge from the texture. It's always nice having the support of your own orchestra—they were really warm and enthusiastic. Though I thought it was really slow and boring when I listened back to it…

It wasn't slow and boring.
• So slow and boring.

And what does the future hold, Nick?
• I suppose one of the reasons we pursue music is to get that 'portfolio career'—it's great not to have a 9–5 existence and to have different projects and disciplines. I really value my work in the Hallé but I have a lot to learn in that role. I'd like to develop my chamber music and I always take recital opportunities as well as all the teaching. To engage with music in as many creative ways as possible is my goal. And I'll be practicing the Elgar Concerto for next year with the Hallé!

On the Edge

Working with Living Composers

• *Jakob Kullberg*

Jakob Kullberg, Artistic Research Fellow at the Norwegian Academy of Music, Associate of the Royal Academy in London and professor of cello at Stavanger University and the Royal Danish Academy, gives us an insight into his musical life.

I'll start by explaining a little about my approach to life: I like to specialise, to really go into depth with whatever interest I have. For example, when I read novels, I tend to read many works by the same author. When it comes to modern composers I try to work with just a few and try to not only get to know all of their works for my instrument, but also those that aren't composed for cello. This at times feels like a process of almost devouring and digesting the music in order to organically assimilate a composer's language. Since it is my aim to work creatively and not just to reproduce the music of a living composer, such a process is necessary as a means to make the musical language my own. My interest lies in the ability to roam freely inside (and at times outside) another person's musical realm—to get so intimately acquainted with this that I am able to create both intuitively and intellectually while still being true and appropriate.

I have worked for over 15 years with the renowned Danish composer Per Nørgård (b. 1932), who over the years has composed many different concertante, solo and chamber music works for me. At the onset of our collaboration I was much more like a student of Nørgård than a collaborator. I immersed myself in his music, and as I am a somewhat inquisitive person, I began to besiege him with a never-ending barrage of questions as to the meaning of the smallest detail in his compositions. I suppose one could say I was looking for anomalies in his compositions, problems that needed a creative solution.

One such thing that previously had been unaddressed was in his cello piece *Solo Intimo*. The cello is muted as the piece slowly unfolds, with a constantly developing intensity culminating in a great climax. Unfortunately, in the rest just prior to this climax one needs to take a moment's time out in order to remove the mute. This completely destroys the 3-4 minute long dynamic build-up. I decided to try, literally and dramatically, to strike at the mute as a means of removing it. The result is an aggressive percussive effect, which Nørgård liked so much he asked me to make sure it was added in the printed version.

Over the years we have continued to develop our creative rapport. On the composer's suggestion I made a version of his solo viola piece called *The Secret Melody* for violin and cello in 2004, a piece now published as our collaborative effort. My instinct back then was that this was an impossible task; a solo piece made into a duo by necessity consists of not only arrangement, but also composition.

Kullberg and Nørgård

To illustrate how far we have taken this partnership I can mention our most recent such exploit: Nørgård's Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Chamber Orchestra. This piece is an elaboration of the composer's viola concerto, *Remembering Child*. As with *The Secret Melody* my job was to make two solo parts out of the viola's single voice. I discussed with Nørgård how a cadenza for the two soloists would add something new to this version. He liked the idea and said I should give it a go. As material for this, I used audio recordings of Nørgård playing through sketches originally intended as a cello solo piece he was composing for me in early 2013. Back then he had assigned me to try my hand at making a solo cello movement out of these sketches.

In the recent double concerto, I first made a selection of about 9 of these sketches, which I then transcribed from the recording. I wasn't to have the sheet music for these composition-sketches, so that the mere act of notating the music in itself would be a quasi-creative or interpretive task.

In short the resulting music, which we premiered with the Bergen Philharmonic in June this year, became an entire movement, the creative work on my part consisting of a myriad of different jobs from orchestration to the composition of connections between sketches to that of choosing the overall shape.

In the coming year I will record Nørgård's viola concerto in my version for cello with Sinfonia Varsovia as well as the composer's 1st Cello Concerto and Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho's 2nd Concerto, both with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.

I know I am very fortunate to work with some of the leading contemporary composers of today such as Kaija Saariaho, Per Nørgård and Bent Sørensen. In my work I am constantly balancing on a knife's edge in my attempt to maintain my creative space within and around their music. This creates an interesting yin and yang-like dynamic consisting of my autonomous desire to be free juxtaposed with a desire to treat their music with sincerity and integrity.

Cello Talk

Frightened by the Stage?

Performance anxiety tips & tricks

• *Branimir Pustički*

Your stomach sends warning signs of unrest. You get doubts about actually going on stage, where nothing seems to work as it should. Your legs shake, your heart races and you wipe the sweat from your palms. In terror, you bring the bow near the string, and...

What you just experienced is stage fright, or performing anxiety. It hits even experienced professionals like Vladimir Horowitz, Renée Fleming and Steven Isserlis. Bodily response to stress can unleash unpleasant symptoms—as the body tries to curl into fetal position, the shoulders go up and the muscles contract, hindering subtle muscular motions and causing shaky hands and legs. Other common symptoms include nausea, dizziness, sweating, dilated pupils and pounding heart. Not very handy for a performer!

Most common causes are lack of self-confidence and experience, and being unprepared. Some overcome the fear just by accumulating performing experience, gaining better practicing skills in the process. However, the causes and effects are very individual. Sometimes a bad stage experience, like a negative review, or an unsatisfactory audition or competition result triggers a negative stimulus for the next performance. Orchestral auditions are a notorious breeding ground of anxiety as one feels the pressure of playing every note right whilst job security and musical future are at stake.

You can actually do a lot about it. Many techniques can help, so let's start!

Adopt a healthy lifestyle

It will improve your life satisfaction factor and make you less prone to anxiety. Stay fit and maintain a stable sleep cycle and balanced diet. Any sort of physical exercise that makes you more supple is great. With yoga or Pilates that comes naturally, but if you prefer the gym or perhaps running, your coach can help you with stretching exercises. It will raise your energy level, help with posture problems, back pain, weak bow arm and fatigue. Limit the intake of coffee, sugar and alcohol—you don't really need that extra stimulus.

Stay positive

Actively avoid being negative for a day and watch what happens. Mistakes do and will happen—it's our response to them that counts.

Improve your practicing sessions

Aim for small improvements and realistic goals that you can reach in reasonable time; this will build your confidence. Never practice out of focus or without goals. A good way of practicing is to take short breaks as soon as full focus is gone. Do something unrelated for a minute—stand up, look through the window, stretch those tense arms or get some fresh air. Even if it happens every 10 minutes, you still get 50 minutes of super-focused, relaxed practicing per hour!

Another important point is to actively find and release points of tension in your body. It will then take less time and willpower to control your posture on stage. A lot of players move beautifully when practicing, but move in a stiff, vertical style on stage. If you determine where in the score you have to move horizontally and practice that movement it will be easier to move on stage and make the sound less stiff.

Relax that nervous bow change by breathing in the middle of the bow. One way of practicing it is by playing scales, two notes on a bow, and never breathing on bow changes. When you feel more in control, practice tricky passages slowly in the same style.

Some specific tips for the concert day include a light exercise, light meal and enough liquid. You can deal with the pre-concert hysteria by letting yourself be nervous for a short period without fighting it. Rub your hands together nervously, pace up and down, let it all out. After those 30 seconds, completely relax. That way the fear peaks before you go on stage. When there, don't make it all about yourself. Think more about the music and the gift of emotions that you want to transfer, instead of your appearance or playing every note right.

If the phobia still persists, don't be ashamed to look for professional help—find a psychologist you feel you can trust.

The cause of my anxiety was the fear of unknown!

After a particularly shaky performance, I devised an exercise which helped me tremendously.
With my cello in playing position and eyes closed, I relax completely and visualise every little step: entering the stage, the clap, the brightness of the lights, the chair, the way I bow and sit, pulling out the spike, putting the endpin holder on the floor, the size of the audience, familiar faces, tuning; really everything that can and will happen. The first time I did this I was so nervous I couldn't start playing! But in the actual performance, everything was so familiar; I had already been there, and nothing could surprise me.

Auditions, the red rag to anxiety

When preparing for an orchestral audition, consider what is expected from requested excerpts in terms of character, volume, rhythm and style. Answering such questions makes you more prepared and less prone to anxiety. Think from a different perspective: the committee will look for a less flashy, precise player who will contribute to the section with good intonation and a healthy, clean sound. Playing legato dotted rhythm with semiquavers instead of triplets in the opening theme of the *Andante con moto* from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony will leave a much better impression than a big, lush vibrato, which doesn't fit the character anyway.

Conclusion

Getting rid of this phobia is not a simple task as it takes time, mental practice and performance opportunities. There's no point letting that hard work you put into practicing go to waste, so think about possible causes and try to find solutions and exercises that work for you. Make extra time in your practicing sessions for mental training and watch your confidence levels grow as you make the stage yours!

Members' News & Views

• From Alessandro d'Attanasio, age 10**:**

La Follia by famous Baroque composer Vivaldi is one the Italian composer's less well-known works. Written in 1705, it is in the Spanish 'Folia' style, which follows a strict cadential pattern. The piece is in a theme and variations style and has eight movements. The piece is in D minor throughout, but ends with a chord in F major, making it in the Picardy style. In my opinion, it is an exceptional piece. The pleasant harmonies and the liveliness of the piece as well as the polyphonic texture and the contrast between the fast and slow movements all make me recommend this beautiful piece to everyone. The third and seventh movements are particularly outstanding due to their animated, arpeggiated constant quavers. The sixth movement with its constant triplets is also excellent, and the final chordal passage is a very good way to top the piece off. The final two movements before the end are my favourites, and I particularly enjoy the third movement too. I must admit that this 18th-century masterpiece is among the best pieces I have ever played for cello. You can get the music from Violoncello Music for Beginners, book 3.

• Hannah Kelleway, age 7,

Reporting from Wymondham Music Festival, 27.6.15: I went to see Richard Tunnicliffe playing three Bach Suites for Cello in Wymondham Abbey as part of the Wymondham Music Festival. Richard Tunnicliffe's cello has a carved scroll which looked like a lion's head to me from where I was sitting. It is a very special cello. He played without a spike in the second half and he re-tuned the A string to a G for Suite No 5. I really enjoyed listening to the Bach Suites and my cello teacher, Maja Passchier arranged for me to sit in the front row so that I could see perfectly. Wymondham Abbey was a beautiful place to hear some lovely music.

• VIOLA for Sale:
1996, by Vanna So, Chicago (William Harris Lee Workshop); 41 cm / 16 1/4 " back length. Good condition by a respected maker. £11,000
Contact: Julian – cellojo@gmail.com or 07745 818484

• From Corinne Frost:

I love gadgets that aid in anyway so here are a few of my favourites:

• Konig & Meyer sell little magnets—very strong—which are brilliant for keeping music on the stand in wind or when using a large number of music pages.

• I also love Pencil Grips (I then use very sharp scissors to mould into the length and shape for each pupil) or Gooshy Grips for the thumb grip on the bow.

• I've recently discovered cellobib.com and am really pleased with the 2 I've bought for the neck of my cellos'. They are individually made and come in different styles, colours and materials.

• If you are playing a work with a lot of strumming pizzicato, it is useful to keep a felt mandarin plectrum in your cello case and use it for rehearsals. Then you will be blister-free for the performance.

• Germolene New Skin is a liquid plastic skin that you can apply to wounded or sore fingers. When I had a chunk out of my left hand finger the week before a concerto I built up about 20 thin layers for the concert day.

• My final favourite is 'I love my cello' pencil, which comes as a 2B pencil, brilliant Faber eraser and 2 magnets so you can attach it to the stand anywhere. A little black storage cover is included.

• For Sale:
19th century German ¾ cello for sale, lovely tone and great projection for a smaller sized cello. It served our son well in competitions, auditions and during his first year at the Royal College of Music Junior Department.
£3,000 (ono)
For any enquiries and to book an appointment to see and try the cello please contact: Florian Leonhard Fine Violins, Tel. 0207 813 3307
www.florianleaonhard.com