LONDON CELLO SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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Issue: Spring 2017

Women, Cellos and . . . Endpins!

• *Valerie Walden*

In 1844, the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung* noted an apparently earth-shattering occurrence:

> It is said that a female cellist (!!!) is appearing in a Paris salon, with the name Christiani-Berbier, admittedly to great applause. These are the fruits of female emancipation!

Lisa B. Christiani is generally recognized as the first internationally acclaimed female cello soloist, but as iconography illustrates, women have played the cello since at least the 16th century. These female pioneers, however, faced a challenge unique to their gender: grasping an instrument between the legs, like horseback riding, was perfectly acceptable for men, but considered too sexually suggestive for women. Perhaps ironically, the eventual solution arose through the desire of male cellists to tackle the underlying practical issue: how to hold a cello to play it comfortably.

When the cello was used as a marching instrument, attaching a neck strap solved the problem, but seated cellists wishing to augment the support provided by their calves and knees had to place the instrument on the floor, on a foot, on a stool, or on a spike of some sort. Use of a support, however, was considered a sign of muscular weakness and only countenanced for beginners, amateurs, women, or, as in the case of Beethoven's cellist Joseph Linke, who was lame, by those with a physical disability. This attitude towards a lifting device began to change in the middle of the 19th century when Belgian cellist Adrien Servais integrated an endpin into his large-pattern Stradivari, and played with it regularly. While professional male cellists slowly accepted the endpin's use over the course of the next fifty years, Servais' adoption of the endpin, which coincidentally allowed the instrument to be played in a more decorous fashion, led to an unanticipated development: a burgeoning of female cellists as soloists, chamber musicians, and orchestral players.

GEORGIE PRAY, 'CELLO SOLOIST.

Professional female orchestras had their origins in Austria (Josephine Amann-Weinlich is thought to have founded the first so-called ladies' orchestra in Vienna in 1868), and the concept was rapidly embraced by the women of Great Britain and America. They were, however, still criticized for being perhaps a bit too sexually promiscuous, as we read in *Demorest's Family Magazine* in 1892:

> Girl musicians have found one great and trying obstacle to overcome and even to-day meet it to a great extent everywhere they go…[the attitude] that girls who play professionally in a band must, as a consequence, be ill-bred and 'fast', fit subjects for whatever coarse jests and criticisms the men might choose to fling at them.

Fortunately, there were two 19th-century cello teachers who had a significant role in changing the perception that female cellists were a novelty act rather than artists: Servais in Belgium and Julius Eichberg in Boston. During the period Servais taught at the Brussels Conservatory (from 1848 until his death in 1866), he instructed Hélene de Katow, Eliza de Try, Rósa Szuk, Anna Krull, and Gabrille Platleau. Eichberg, who founded the Boston Conservatory of Music in 1867, trained Lettie Launder, Laura Webster, Georgia Pray, and Alice Gray Lathrop. He also organized and promoted the all-female Eichberg String Quartet, which provides an excellent example of how a women's chamber music ensemble could compete in the mainstream musical world. The quartet, with cellist Lettie Launder, began giving concerts in Boston, New York and Philadelphia in 1878, performing quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and Mendelssohn. Then in 1881, with cellist Laura Webster, the ladies went to Berlin to study with the noted violinist Joseph Joachim. Webster would go on to become a highly respected string teacher in Boston, and acquired a 1632 Amati cello described as 'a remarkably fine instrument with a clear, rich tone.'

After the quartet returned to America in 1882, Alice Lathrop assumed the cello position and the quartet continued to tour until Eichberg's death in 1893. Eichberg's quartet legacy lived on through Georgia Pray Lasselle, and then his violin student Olive Mead, who formed a quartet with cellist Lillian Littlehales in 1903. This quartet performed regularly in New York City and stayed together until 1917.

Littlehales studied at the Royal College of Music, completed a Master's degree at the University of Syracuse, and taught cello and chamber music at Vassar from 1922-1927. She also studied with Casals, and published his biography in 1929. Littlehales's playing was lauded for flawless intonation and a 'depth of musical feeling'. The repertoire of her recitals from the early 20th century consisted of numerous short 'salon' pieces by Popper, Squire, and MacDowell, typical programming of the solo presentations of other women cellists in both Europe and America in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Not surprisingly, Servais's students also played their teacher's compositions, as well as Romberg's concertos, both de rigueur for any cellist trained in a European conservatory. These works are found on the concert programmes of Elisa de Try and Hélène de Katow, both of whom toured extensively, including in the United States. Hélène also participated in several all-female chamber music ensembles, her quartet performances in Paris being recorded as early as 1859, when she was 19. One particular concert was considered 'a very unusual musical event' by the reviewer of *Le Guide musical*.

Although photographs exist for only a few of the women who played cello professionally before World War I, all existing iconography supports the case that all played with an endpin, and contrary to the acceptable 'sidesaddle' posture described in some contemporary cello methods, placed the cello between their knees just as men did. However, the women's sound production was notably different to their male counterparts: most reviews, beginning with those of Lisa Christiani, note that women played with a softer sound, more ladylike as it were. 'The tone is not the strongest and broadest', wrote the reviewer for *Dwight's Journal of Music* of de Katow's playing in 1865, 'but rather feminine, and true, musical, searching, and expressive.' In 1897, similar comments were made of Agga Fritsche, a Danish cellist who studied with Klengel in Leipzig:

> Fraulein Fritsche does not have a very large, but a very sympathetic soft tone, a technique which has also grown to the most difficult problems, and phrases with as much taste as intelligence.

Elsa Ruegger, a Swiss-born cellist who eventually emigrated to Detroit and founded the D*etroit String Quartet*, was similarly described at age 18 after an 1899 concert in Boston. While having faultless intonation,

> her tone is not big or strong, but it is pure. Her technique is ample and she plays with a musician's sincerity of style.

As definitions of acceptable feminine behaviour shifted dramatically after World War I, so did the sound production and careers of female cellists. May Mukle, Beatrice Harrison, and especially the fiery Guillermina Suggia captured the imagination of audiences and lessened the distinctions between genders as the 20th century unfolded. Of Suggia's playing Van der Straeten wrote, 'not only was her technique remarkable, but her tone was of a masculine power seldom heard from a lady violoncellist', perhaps as a counterbalance to the poetical emotion found in the playing of her lover and fellow endpin aficionado, Pablo Casals. Whatever the reason, Suggia and her generation ushered in the modern era, where depth of musical feeling, powerful playing and technical brilliance are the provenance of both female and male cellists.

Valerie Walden received her Ph.D from the University of Auckland. She is the author of One Hundred Years of Violoncello: A History of Technique and Performance Practice, 1740-1840, a chapter in The Cambridge Companion to the Cello, articles for the Reader's Guide to Music and 31 entries in the 2000 edition of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. She is a faculty member at the College of the Sequoias in California, principal cellist of the Tulare County Symphony, and a member of the piano trio Trinitas.

Of Special Interest

Echoes From The Past: In Search Of Fauré's *Élégie*

• *Michael Murray*

By all accounts, Gabriel Fauré's exquisite *Élégie* Opus 24 for cello and piano found immediate popularity upon its first performance in 1880, given in the salon of the composer Camille Saint-Saëns. One can imagine the awe-struck silence that befell its first audience after those three last piano chords were played by Fauré himself, struck like mournful bells over cellist Jules Leopold-Loeb's decaying low C string.

We read in Robert Bladock's biography of Pablo Casals that the great Catalan cellist played the *Élégie* for Queen Victoria in 1899 as she rested on the Isle of Wight. Certainly by the turn of the 20th century, Fauré's *Élégie* was finding an important place on public recital programmes. How long would it take the *Élégie* to enter the domestic bloodstream of commercial recording? And who were the pioneers of early recordings of the *Élégie*?

When beginning this search, I turned immediately to Pearl Records' fascinating collection of early cello recordings drawn from the archives of British cellist and co-founder of the London Cello Society Keith Harvey. Scanning the contents of both volumes of

this indispensable collection and finding no *Élégie*, it occurred to me that the time limitations of the most common early gramophone recordings could not easily accommodate the duration of the *Élégie*. Did Fauré's *Élégie* need to wait for the development of long-playing recording technology in order to find a recorded history? The answer was surprising in many ways.

One might assume that the earliest recording of the *Élégie* would have been made by Pablo Casals. His far-reaching fame, after all, coincided with the early days of gramophone recordings and Casals counted Fauré among his friends in Paris. The longest timing on Casals' earliest recordings is 4:42 (Godard's *Berceuse de Jocelyn*) and it might be assumed that Casals, an artist in possession of strong convictions, felt that it would be a disservice to divide the *Élégie*. between two sides of a recording. Casals did record the *Élégie*, but not as cellist: a 1956 recording exists of Casals conducting the work at the Sorbonne in Paris. It's something of an *Élégie* extravaganza, with an orchestra made up of over one hundred cellists, luminaries among them, all with noble intentions, but resulting in some excess of sonority that Fauré might have found a shade too Bayreuth.

Maurice Maréchal

The earliest known recording of the *Élégie*, as documented by the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music, was made in the EMI studios in Hayes, Middlesex in 1921,

Beatrice Harrison

by the eminent British cellist, Beatrice Harrison. The date of this recording follows closely her first recording of Elgar's Cello Concerto and the premiere Harrison gave of Delius' Cello Concerto. Sadly, there is no evidence that this first-known recording can be found today. Keats wrote that unheard melodies are sweeter than those heard but it would be wonderful to hear Beatrice Harrison's rendition of the iconic *Élégie* made during Fauré's lifetime.

In 1924, Judith Bokor recorded the *Élégie* for Columbia Records. Bokor was a Hungarian cellist with links to David Popper and Hugo Becker who settled in the Netherlands in 1919 and pursued a successful international career. Several of her recordings can be found today but, unfortunately, her recording of Fauré's *Élégie* is not among them.

The earliest recording that has not been lost and is readily available today was made by French cellist Maurice Maréchal. This recording was made in 1928, just four years after the death of the composer, and can be found on YouTube. It is an important document, in that Maréchal was a student of the dedicatee of the *Élégie*, Jules Leopold-Loeb. What one can hear in this performance is surely an echo of what that first audience heard in the

salon of Saint-Saëns. Maréchal begins deliberately in full-throated richness, offering sensitively placed *portamenti* in measure 12 and a beautiful sense of line throughout. The A-flat major melody is delivered with a varied sweetness of tone and unfolds with a growing sense of urgency as the music leads to the return of the main theme. Maréchal brings poetry to the final moments of the *Élégie* by lingering and hesitating, as if broken by loss and regret. It is a beautiful performance that deserves hearing.

Today ArchivMusic lists nearly 100 available recordings of the *Élégie* made by a wide constellation of artists. We must not forget the *Élégie's* recorded legacy, for this history itself forms an elegy to great cellists of the past who still stand to inform and enhance our present.

Michael Murray is a Professor of Music at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri USA. He is Principal Cellist of the Springfield Symphony and an avid chamber music performer. He and Selma Gokcen began an e-mail correspondence late in 2016 regarding the questions that were eventually answered in this article. The author thanks the London Cello Society for providing him with the impetus to organize this information and for the goodwill that gave support for digging into the early recorded history of a cornerstone of cello literature.

Cello Talk

The beef, the bone and the guts - extracting the max from cello etudes

• *Hannah Roberts FRNCM*

As most performers, teachers and their students will know, preparing an etude or 'study' may sometimes seem more of a necessary task with a limited goal than the more appetising prospect of the rich repertoire with which we cellists have been provided.

In my role as a teacher of conservatoire stage and young professional cellists, I am aware of the need to develop an effective, thorough, but also creative approach to working on studies; just as every part of a cow, not just the choice cuts of fillet, sirloin and T-bone steaks, has a use – bones to make glue, hide to make leather goods, innards for tripe, and so on – my aim is to derive something useful from every part of the exercise.

Work should ideally start with the identification of the main purposes of the study - is it a 'bow' or 'left hand' study, for example? Herein lies the first potential trap. Any identification must be tempered by an awareness of how other aspects will interact with the main challenge; in a good study there will usually be at least two or three basic aspects to consider.

Having first identified the first basic task, for example fluent and accurate shifting, extracting the essence of the problem (the two notes contained in the shift) and devising two or three methods of working the shift are necessary and interesting first steps. These might include working the interval in even rhythm within a slur, and in both types of dotted rhythm, with or without a 'guide' note if the interval is a larger one. This may seem obvious, but to derive maximum benefit, some essential observations must be associated with these methods. To what pulse is the timing of the shift to be subjected? When practising at a slower tempo, would further mental subdivision help to give the left hand a more precise timing? What effect does the left hand weight have during the shift, and are we carrying the weight evenly? If the shift is in a crescendo with the top note the arrival point, the left hand weight would increase during the shift, but conversely if we made a diminuendo from a strong starting note, the weight should lighten (as in the sensation of releasing a balloon on a piece of string). What elements of the head, neck and shoulder posture are most conducive to the fluency of the shift through freeing the arm, and do we tend to prioritise the obvious end goal of the intonation over the earlier stages of the process from which this end goal results?

Similarly with a 'bow' study, we must harvest the widest range of 'offshoot' benefits surrounding the initial steps. For example, a study rich in string crossings requires us to identify the bow balance

David Popper

Alfredo Piatti

needed on each string. If, as in the case of the first study in Popper's *High School of Cello Playing*, this is marked staccato, benefit will be derived from working the bow balance first in a similar part of the bow as for the staccato, but with longer strokes and ON the string. From this, we can observe and adjust the bow balance, and identify the optimum and proportionate level of activity from arm, wrist and fingers. The staccato itself could then be worked on a single note (but on each string, since the string thickness responds differently with the bow). This would include work on the 'suspension mechanism' of the fingers, which must remain pliant and capable of 'springiness' when interacting with the string through the bow. In order to derive the 'extra nutrients', we need to include the demands of the phrasing and voicings in the study. There is a Bach-inspired style here, with frequent voicings and bass lines knitted into the texture. These require more sophisticated use of bow distribution and right hand fingers, applying more weight to the denser bass or expressive harmony notes to produce the ultimate level of variety and expression, rather than simply an efficient execution of 'the stroke'.

The conclusive phase of progress must then be to assess the impact of one aspect on another and to devise intelligent and imaginative solutions. Examples might range from identifying increased use of bow when the left hand has a passage containing frequent shifts, noticing a correlation between a tricky passage of double stops in thumb position and a tightening of the bow arm, or seeing a reduction of accuracy when more demands are made on phrasing and dynamic shapes. Solutions (in the same order) might include experimenting with slower bow speeds and a new sounding point for the bow, playing just a single double stop with a free bow stroke whilst singing the top line of the original double stop melody (as in the second of Piatti's Twelve Caprices for Solo Cello), and most importantly, insisting on playing the musical shape that will be needed for each extracted exercise group before incorporating it in the whole passage.

Just as in the analogy with the cow, all the ingredients are present both within the study and within the student to solve the problem – success lies in identifying whether 'fillet steak, leather or glue' are needed, and in which combination all the elements can help the player gain most control in the final phase of their work on the study.

Hannah Roberts is a solo and chamber musician. She is principal cellist of Manchester Camerata, and Professor of Cello at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.
You can catch Hannah Roberts this summer where she will be teaching at the 'London Masterclasses' www.londonmasterclasses.com and her own summer course: www.summercellocourse.co.uk

Stretch Your Imagination!

Beyond Cello II

A Day with Ernst Reijseger, Birdworld, Ivan Hussey, Hannah Marshall, Shirley Smart And Kate Shortt

London Cello Society's second adventure into the unknown is part of Kings Place's Cello Unwrapped season. Taking place on 12th March, it's a workshop, concert and cabaret with some of the UK cello world's most innovative performers.

First up will be Ivan Hussey, discussing and demonstrating Arpezzato – a new style of cello playing that uses techniques imported from the world of Pop/Rock, Blues and Jazz. He's followed by Hannah Marshall, with a workshop on improvisation for anyone wanting to find ways to explore the huge range of expressive sound possibilities of the cello. Shirley Smart, up next, teaches a complementary session on the role of aural learning in improvisation, and will be discussing practice techniques to help develop improvisational skills.

Cellist/improviser/vocalist Kate Shortt, will provide a fun opportunity to try out funk bass lines, layering hook lines, vocal callings, chants, and free style jamming. Finally, the extraordinary Ernst Reijseger closes out the workshop. One of those rare artists who lives completely in the moment, Ernst's work leads into challenging territory – creating sounds, voices and rhythmic patterns which take on a life of their own under his magical hands.

Following a Q&A, you can hear Ernst and Shirley in concert at 4pm. Finally at 7pm, the Beyond Cello Cabaret, with our four workshop tutors and Birdworld, rounds off what will be an amazing, unmissable day.

Interested? Listen to 'Beyond Cello Day with Shirley Smart - A Kings Place Podcast' on www.soundcloud.com to find out more.

Members' News & Views

• From Laura Ritchie:
At the Cello Weekend on April 1-2 at the University of Chichester, you will learn, perform, and laugh. Explore chamber music, take part in workshops that get you thinking about extended techniques, enjoy opportunities to perform in front of peers in a supportive environment, and everyone performs in an the all-cello orchestra. The Saturday/Sunday schedule runs from 10am-5pm and the course finishes with a cello orchestra concert. We will play music from Bach to pop. All ages and abilities welcome. This year's guest clinicians include:

- Angela East – cellist in Red Priest
- Kay Tucker – author of Stringbabies
- Nicolai Krinitsky – Russian Cellist
- Joe Chilcott – Singer/Songwriter

The weekend is also supported by three string manufacturers, and there will be a workshop by D'Addario on strings, their differences, and how to care for them. The course fee is £50/£35 students. Bursaries are available for Chichester University students.
For more information and to book please contact Dr Laura Ritchie on L.Ritchie@chi.ac.uk

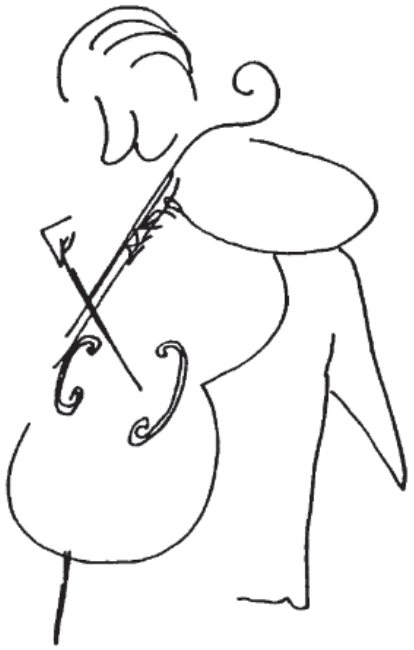
10% reduction in fees to LCS members

• From Julian Ogilvie, on the sticky topic of rosin…
'What kind of rosin should I use?' If you ask string manufacturers that question, they are more than likely to recommend a different kind of rosin for each type of string (e.g. Pirastro Eudoxa or Oliv-Evah). Does it really make that much difference? Well, rosins clearly differ, but personally I think you should find one you like, and stick with it (if you'll pardon the pun…).

You get what you pay for to some extent, and I have found the 'gold' rosins to be worth the money for the extra smoothness they give. My current favourite is Larica Gold, which comes in four grades. Take no notice of whether it's supposed to be for violin or cello – I use Gold no.2, which gives enough grip without being too sticky. It seems to produce the best core sound from my cello without extraneous surface noise or too much dust. If you don't want to pay £25 for rosin (although that's still less than almost any string you will buy, and replace more often…), then I find Salchow rosin to be almost as good at about half the price.

• From Jo Cole:
I am enjoying exploring Lionel Handy's transcription for Cello of Albert Sammons' classic work 'The Secret of Technique in Violin Playing' – subtitled 'Daily Practice for Soloists and Advanced Players'. Lionel was introduced to the original by the late lamented Hugh Bean with the appealing summary that it was of great benefit to students, and to professional players with limited practice time. I remember Lionel showing me exercise no 5 on page 1 several years ago on tour with the Academy of St Martins – I heard him practising it in the hotel and my curiosity was piqued! This book is full of really useful agility and accuracy tests as well as Bowing Techniques variations reminiscent of the enduring Feuillard: Daily Exercises. A couple of the stretching exercises need careful handling but Lionel suggests alternatives for smaller hands.

Lionel presents this important and useful manual on 10th May at 6 pm at the Royal Academy of Music. (free entry)



The London Cello Society thanks Kathy Weston for her excellent services as editor and proofreader.