

# STRADIVARI TRUST

25 YEARS OF INSTRUMENT TRUSTS



# About this guide



SINCE 1985, NIGEL BROWN HAS helped provide instruments to more than 30 artists, including the likes of Nigel Kennedy, Steven Isserlis, Natalie Clein and Jennifer Pike. But this publication, which celebrates 25 years of Instrument Trusts, is not supposed to be a retrospective. It is something much more alive: a current snapshot of every artist who has benefited from one of these schemes..



In 2004, Brown set up the Stradivari Trust to create an all-encompassing aegis for his musical projects and to act as a channel for charitable donations to the Syndicated Instrument Trusts. Our aim, in compiling this publication, has been to offer a panoramic view of the Stradivari Trust and, in particular, of the Instrument Trusts: from the first ben-

eficiary (Nigel Kennedy) to the newest recruit (Helen Kruger) and beyond, to some who hope to join the ranks shortly (Atrium Quartet). Every artist who has ever been helped by a syndicate scheme is included in the following pages, as well as some who have received help of a different kind directly from the Stradivari Trust. The result is a diverse record of a group of highly individual musicians.

In talking to the musicians featured here, we have encountered soloists and orchestral players, teachers and pupils, Baroque specialists and jazz virtuosos, three BBC Young Musician of the Year winners and too many Beethoven devotees to count. It has been a fascinating, comic and often humbling experience. Yet this disparate group has one thing in common: a complete and extraordinary devotion to their instruments. Each artist spoke of their violin, viola, cello or bass as an extension of themselves, often drawing parallels with love and marriage to convey their strength of feeling.

Integral to the smooth running of the Instrument Trusts are the violin dealers: we are grateful to Charles Beare and Florian Leonhard both for supporting this publication and for their written contributions. From Leonhard (on page 5) we learn about Stradivari's golden period and the tantalising possibility that we are living through a golden age of restoration. Beare (on page 4) directs our view to the expanding string market in the Far East and discusses what makes the sound of a violin so beautiful.

Nigel Brown himself offers an explanation of the mechanics of the Instrument Trusts as well as exploring his own motivation for establishing them. The history of the Instrument Schemes and of the Stradivari Trust is laid out in the feature on page 6, which also examines the other plates that the Trust is currently spinning.

The body of this publication, though, is taken up – as it should be – by the musicians and their instruments, the oldest of which is a violin from 1570. It is extraordinary to think that when this instrument was being crafted, Elizabeth I was on the throne in Britain, the Medicis held Florence in the palm of their hands, and the very concept of the violin as we know it was just being born.

The work of the Trust has been life-changing for each musician interviewed in the following pages and will remain vital in the future

One cannot, however, dwell on the past for long, before turning to the future. For some of the musicians interviewed, the awareness that their instrument would long outlive them weighed heavily on their hearts; for others, it was thrilling. This publication is essentially a look to the future: the future of string playing, the future of these particular beautiful instruments and the future of the Stradivari Trust and its Instrument Schemes. These schemes have been life-changing for each musician interviewed in the following pages and will remain vital in the future..

**Mark Austin and Lizzie Davis**



*The Stradivari Trust*





# Nigel Brown

THE RELATIONSHIP that string players have with their instruments is complex. Apart from the intricacies of set-up there are also those of condition, especially where old instruments are concerned – and the majority of players are persuaded that something old, not to say antique, is

most likely to give them the means of expression they desire. Playing an old instrument with a pedigree and a history may also help with the *amour propre*. Few musicians are prepared to chance their arm with a new instrument if they have the opportunity to play on something old and distinguished.

This preference has led to a two-tier instrument market. New instruments, even when made by the acknowledged top contemporary makers, do not command prices much above the £20,000 mark, which is unfortunately a fraction of what old ones sell for and is not even enough to secure a good 19th-century French bow. Furthermore, there is no indication as to how long it will take for modern instruments to take their place in even the lower echelons of the main instrument market, which is dominated by the great

names, invariably Italian and mostly from the 17th and 18th centuries. The demand for old instruments clearly far exceeds the supply because there must now be very few undiscovered masterpieces and the makers themselves are, of course, long gone.

Despite the efforts of what some would regard as iconoclasts and cynics, there is no indication that things are about to change and if musicians, especially young ones, are going to be able to gain access to the main market some financial help has to be found, preferably of a sympathetic kind. By this I mean that the people with the money need to be prepared to put the interests of the musician above the financial reward they will expect to receive by investing in a long-term, apparently well-supported world market. Fortunately over the last 25 years or so I have found many people willing to invest in this altruistic way. I have also benefited from much helpful advice in refining my simple idea, which starts off with a syndicate purchasing an instrument chosen by the musician.

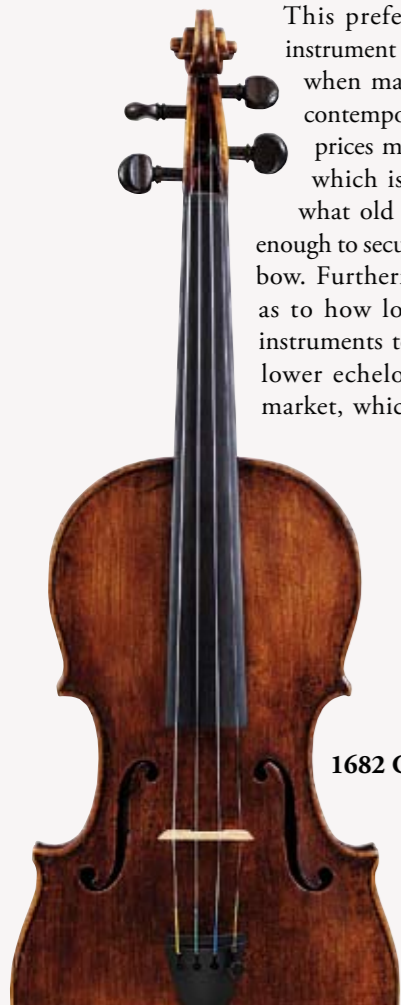
There are no tax breaks available for the purchase of musical instruments other than for working musicians. Instrument ownership is expressed via a Bare Trust: rather than using proportional percentages to express how much each contributor owns – including if possible the musician themselves – notional shares are created. A £500,000 instrument will have 500,000 shares worth £1 each. If you put up £10,000, you

will get 10,000 shares, and so on. The price starts at £1 per share and moves only as and when there is a revaluation, which takes place on the anniversary of the date the Trust was set up. Trusts typically have a life of between ten and twenty years, depending on the age of the musician. At each anniversary the musician is offered the opportunity to buy shares at the new price.

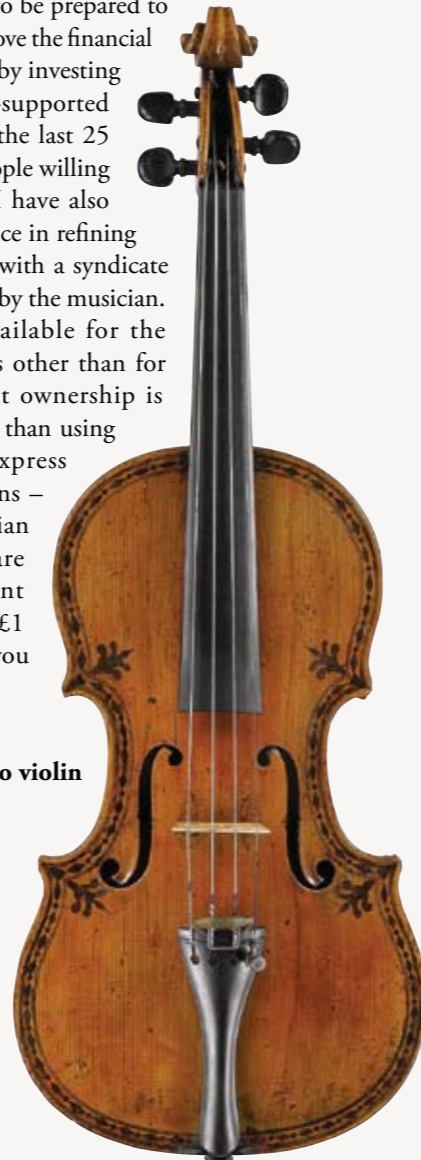
There is no rent, since a meaningful one would be prohibitive, so members of the ownership syndicate make financial gains only by virtue of any appreciation in the value of the instrument. The musician covers all maintenance and insurance costs, the latter being surprisingly reasonably priced because insurers have observed that, on the whole, musicians guard their instruments with their lives!

The process described above has worked well. More than 30 of the UK's top string players – violinists, violists, cellists and a double bass player – have benefited. The timescale of the trusts has meant that, to date, approximately half have been able to buy their contributors out so that they now own the instrument of their choice. This appears to support my long-held belief that being able to use a good enough instrument on a secure long-term basis contributes materially to the making of a successful career. The investors have received a very reasonable and non-volatile return on their money while enjoying the considerable satisfaction of seeing just how much help they have given to really talented players in a very competitive profession. The total value of instruments currently held through the schemes is approximately £4m.

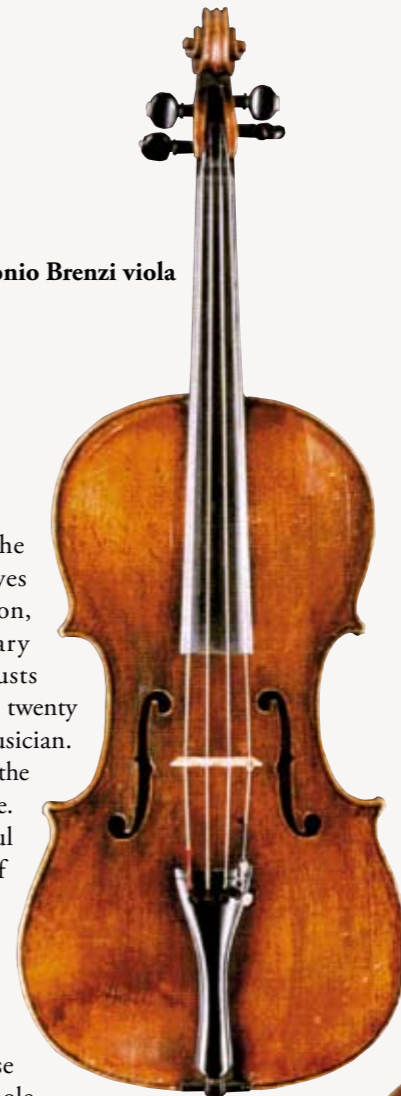
**Nigel Brown OBE**



1682 Grancino violin



1784 Gagliano violin



1610 Antonio Brenzi viola



1777 'Simpson' Guadagnini cello



c.1650-84 Nicolò Amati violin



# Charles Beare



THE VIOLIN IS considered by many to be the most perfect of all Western musical instruments. Not only is its design visually graceful, but its tonal qualities also encompass every emotion from drama and brilliance to the most soulful beauty. Its expressive powers most closely resemble those of the human voice, and some of the greatest music ever composed is for the violin.

It is generally considered that Italy was the birthplace of the violin and no collection of musical instruments is complete without representative examples from that country. Its historical antecedents were the viol family, but early court documents exist

suggesting that Isabella d'Este's court in Ferrara was already ordering violins as well as viols as early as 1511.

During these early years of the violin's development, Brescia was the centre of violin making. The entire focus moved to Cremona with Andrea Amati and his sons Girolamo (Hieronymus) and Antonio, and the Amati family achieved its pinnacles in Andrea's and Nicolò's work. The other key violin-making family of Cremona was the Guarneri dynasty, and of course the ultimate craftsman of not only Cremona, but the whole of Europe, was Antonio Stradivari. So influential and durable was Stradivari's legacy that violin makers today continue to base their work on his model. His violins were highly prized and very expensive even during his lifetime, and unlike many other makers, his clientele included many kings, princelings and noble families. He is probably the only violin maker whose name is known by the average

1711 'Wooldridge' Stradivari violin



cab driver, and a fine Strad (as they are familiarly known) is the centrepiece of any important collection.

It is difficult to explain precisely how important it is for a soloist to have a really fine instrument to play. Of course a top musician will perform well on a fairly ordinary instrument but a great Italian instrument gives the soloist a far greater palette to work with, as well as a depth of sound and powers of projection that carry its voice above and beyond the forces of a modern orchestra. The knowledge that the instrument is capable of so much gives the performer inspiration and confidence 'in the heat of the battle', as Isaac Stern used to say.

The quest for the perfect violin is not a new one: most of the great 19th-century soloists wanted to play a Stradivari or a Guarneri 'del Gesù' and succeeded in obtaining one. What has changed is the value of these instruments. What was affordable 150 years ago is now out of reach for most of the younger soloists because, quite simply, demand has outstripped supply.

Violins are unique works of art but, unlike paintings, they are also tools of the musical trade. Without a fine example a soloist may struggle to enjoy a successful career. Since World War II, there has been a dramatic increase in the enthusiasm for Western music among Far Eastern nations. Japan was the first to enter the market in a significant way and prices began to move upwards. More recently Korea has proved to be a strongly expanding market and it can only be a matter of time before China becomes an active participant in the field. As a result, any foundation or group of individuals that takes an interest in making these instruments available to the next generation is doing a service both to the musician and to the world of music in the widest possible sense.

**Charles Beare**

# Florian Leonhard



I AM OFTEN ASKED, 'What is the secret of Antonio Stradivari?' I answer that he succeeded in his craft in more areas than anybody else ever has. The instruments of his golden period unite all his top achievements: designing the arching across and lengthwise; an excellent outline that maximises volume without making the instrument bulky for the player; his choice of the finest woods for sound and beauty; and the fine, intricate purfling, f-holes and scroll. He also used the finest ground treatment which, as well as producing a fine-toned, orange-red varnish, helps the wood to be neither

too harsh-sounding nor too spongy. It gives a core sound as well as brilliance at the top end, while allowing for a soft, warm response at the bottom end.

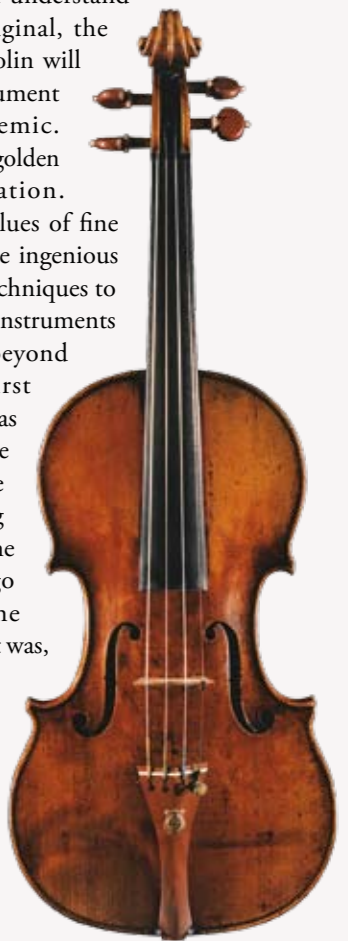
Stradivari's instruments allow the player maximum power while also responding effortlessly at pianissimo, and they offer endless possibilities in terms of tone colour. He was a fine craftsman and, while it is often asserted that he was an artist, I would classify violin making as being a craft that borders on art, rather than art itself.

Like most of our great engineers and designers, Stradivari was only too aware of the demands of the heritage of his craft. At a young age he had essentially perfected the type of instrument that had made a name for the Amati family. These were refined, precise, balanced works, destined to be used by court musicians of the most illustrious and wealthy families across Europe. The reputation of Cremona as the place to go shopping for your new orchestra was uncontested. As a 17th- and 18th-century nobleman, there was no better way to impress your guests than to commission a composition by the most fashionable composer and hold the premiere in the stylish surroundings of your gilded music room. The violins would, of course, be Cremonese.

While his contemporaries were generally content to continue making the same type of instrument that Cremona was famous for, Stradivari continually reflected on what he did and sought to improve upon it. I take the same view with restoration and making in my workshop, encouraging subtle ingenuity with one eye firmly on the past. Even when an instrument is damaged almost beyond recognition I believe there is always a chance to save it. No matter the state of disrepair, from missing corners and multiple cracks to recut f-holes and distorted arching, when one can see and understand the essence of the original, the matter of when the violin will be a fine player's instrument again becomes academic.

We are presently in a golden age of violin restoration. The ever increasing values of fine instruments allow more ingenious and labour-intensive techniques to be applied to resurrect instruments hitherto considered beyond repair. One of the first commissions I took on as a restorer was a Vuillaume suffering from fire damage – just writing those words now fills me with a sense of vertigo as the memory of the challenge looms large. It was, however painstaking and frustrating, a job worth doing. And a real artist now has a great instrument on which to perform great art.

**Florian Leonhard**



1707 'La cathédrale' Stradivari violin





Nigel Brown in a portrait  
by Louise Riley-Smith



# Can he fix it? Yes he can!

NIGEL BROWN IS THE BRAINS BEHIND THE STRADIVARI TRUST. HE TELLS MICHAEL QUINN ABOUT HIS INSTRUMENTAL INSPIRATIONS AND HOW HE TURNED HIS PASSION INTO AN ENTERPRISE THAT HELPS MUSICIANS ACQUIRE INSTRUMENTS

FINDING HIMSELF AT AN INSTRUMENT sale in Sotheby's auction house in London in 1971 changed Nigel Brown's life. As it turned out, it would also change the lives of countless musicians in the years to come.

Under the hammer that fateful day was a Stradivari violin, the 'Lady Blunt', made 250 years before and named after one of its former owners, the poet Byron's granddaughter. Brown was instantly smitten by the instrument, but

its romantic allure was lent added lustre when it achieved a then record-shattering sale price of \$200,000 (equivalent to some £80,000 at the time, although dwarfed recently when it was resold for nearly \$10m). Nearly four decades on, Brown still has a newspaper cutting recording the sale and, while it's no longer kept close to his heart, the memory of that first brush with history and glamour clearly still has the capacity to quicken his pulse.

'I became a regular visitor at Sotheby's auctions when I realised that I could walk in off the street and play anything I wanted to,' recalls Brown, a keen amateur violinist who picked up his first instrument at the age of six. Spurred on by the enthusiasm of a family friend, he quickly acquired a life-long infatuation with fine instruments. 'Rather precociously, from day one I seemed to know that the best instruments were Italian and probably 18th-century.'

Seduced by the 'Lady Blunt', Brown spent 'possibly too much time and money' in the years that followed 'building up

'Rather precociously, from day one I seemed to know that the best instruments were Italian and probably 18th-century'

my knowledge and acquiring huge volumes of books about violins and sales catalogues' in spare time stolen from building his own businesses, initially as an insurance broker and subsequently in stock broking, investment management and venture capital. Today, his eponymous NW Brown Group looks after £500m to £1b of private clients' interests in stocks and shares.

An approach by Nigel Kennedy in 1984 (the year he released his debut recording of Elgar's Violin Concerto) to look after his finances prompted Brown to branch out in a wholly unexpected way. When a polite enquiry about what instrument Kennedy played received the bald answer 'A violin, mate', Brown resolved on the spot 'to find someone to buy him a Strad. I knew that Jacqueline du Pré had been given the "Davidov" Strad, that Anne Sophie Mutter had received the "Emiliani", that Pinchas Zukerman had got the "Dushkin" Guarneri and so on. I thought that's how it must operate: >





CUCO players in rehearsal

a promising talent came along and a benign patron duly appeared.'

It took over two years before Brown found such a person, but this resulted in the purchase of the 'La cathédrale' Stradivari for Kennedy, at a cost of £370,000. He then made a decision that placed the relationship on a unique footing. 'We notionally created 100 shares covering the cost of the violin and suggested that Nigel purchase them at the rate of one per year. Within three years he had a ten per cent share in it and by 1990 he had full ownership of it.'

News of the arrangement spread faster than even Kennedy's signature quicksilver playing and soon, Brown recalls, 'I had a queue of musicians knocking on my door clamouring for me to do a similar thing for them.' Brown decided to establish a programme of syndicated trusts with the intention of purchasing valuable antique instruments to make available to promising young British musicians.

He hit upon the notion of sourcing funds from a group rather than from individual donors 'because it was easier to spread the investment risk across several people rather than just one, and to avoid placing musicians at the whim of one person who might be more demanding of them than I considered to be right and proper.' Built on the mechanism of a Bare Trust, which allowed for a declaration of ownership on a group basis, creating a favourable investment proposition for

potential syndicate members, investments are typically in the region of £5,000 to £30,000 per investor, and syndicates vary in size from ten to forty individuals.

The beneficiaries of Brown's syndicates were unlikely to be obliged to play for their benefactors at dinner parties and weddings. And more strikingly, the musician had the option to purchase the instrument in easy-to-manage increments across the life of a trust that could last for ten to twenty years.

Brown explains: 'The musician will try to buy out the group owners of the instrument over the life of the Trust, but they have to pay the going rate, based on annual revaluations. And it works: musicians buy shares at the end of each year or accumulate money to approach the syndicate to sell shares, and in more than half of the arrangements I've set up, the musician now owns the instrument.' Central to Brown's concept of the trusts is that 'musicians should have ownership. Syndicate members aren't motivated by money, even though they will get a financial return because instruments go up in price.'

**'Musicians buy shares at the end of each year, and in more than half of the arrangements I've set up, the musician now owns the instrument'**

While the original trusts were to be formalised with the creation of the Stradivari Trust in 2003, Brown's love of all things stringed also took an unexpected turn in 1990. 'People



left: the Endellion Quartet with pianist Clare Hammond below: Matthew Barley, one of the Trust's many beneficiaries



began to remark that I was providing all sorts of services for musicians – including looking after their financial affairs – so why didn't I set up an agency?'

Brown was initially reluctant to expand into management, but events overtook him when he was introduced to James Brown ('unrelated, but always accused of being my son'), who was playing viola in the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Together they decided to launch a new venture. 'Originally we were going to set up a diary service for orchestral musicians with financial services added on top because we saw that musicians were always being ripped off in the financial services area; they were such an easy target for salesmen. We wanted to offer an honest deal.'

At the same time, Brown was creating a syndicate to buy an instrument for the cellist Alexander Baillie, who abruptly announced that he had sacked his agent and that Brown was going to take his place. 'We had no choice but to become a manager of musicians,' Brown recalls with a laugh.

It was Baillie's happy ambush of the reluctant managers-to-be that led to the formation in 1990 of the Hazard Chase Agency. 'The next in were the Endellion Quartet, whose leader Andrew Watkinson had a violin on loan from us at the time. They were followed by the pianist Martin Roscoe and things started to build from there.'

Brown stayed with the agency as it grew into an international force, leaving in 2002, two years after a management buyout from the NW Brown Group, although strong links remain with its present chairman, John Willan, a trustee of the Stradivari Trust.

Established with the wider aim of 'furthering the cause of the art and science of music', the Stradivari Trust, while exploiting the syndicate-based format for purchasing and passing on instruments, also supports a range of other projects. One of its most successful ventures has been providing the funding for the Endellion Quartet's acclaimed survey of the complete Beethoven quartets on Warner Classics. Education figures prominently, too, with support for CUCO, Cambridge University's leading student orchestra, and the Nigel W. Brown music

prize, launched in 2003, for promising undergraduate musicians.

Musicians to have benefited over the years from involvement with the Stradivari Trust and its forerunners include high-profile cellists Steven Isserlis (who secured a Montagnana instrument), Matthew Barley (a J.C. Gigli), and violinists Christopher Warren-Green (a Guarneri) and Matthew Trusler, whose Guadagnini instrument has since been joined by the 'Wooldridge' Stradivari. Current schemes are witnessing the transfer of ownership of a Gofriller violin to Jennifer Pike, Guadagnini's 'Simpson' cello to Natalie Clein, a Brenzi viola and Joseph Henry bow to Lawrence Power, and a Testore-attributed double bass to Graham Mitchell.

With such instruments relatively rare and dwindling further over time, Brown is faced with the problem of the number of emerging musicians in need of a fine instrument increasing year by year, and the occasional interference of speculators. 'Instruments are a good bankable investment but if you introduce too much of a financial element into this market, you force prices up and, usually, put conditions on when and how musicians can use the instruments. But so long as the market is driven by genuine collectors and musicians themselves, it will remain steady. Prices will go up, but not in an irrational way.'

Across its short life, says Brown, the syndicated trusts and the Stradivari Trust have raised 'many millions' and along the way he has 'met some extraordinary people and the most extraordinary instruments'. And supreme among them? None other, he declares without a moment's pause, than the 'Lady Blunt': 'Apart from the "Messiah" in the Ashmolean Museum and the "Viotti" in the Royal Academy, the "Lady Blunt" is probably the most perfect Strad – an extraordinary instrument and always entertaining.'



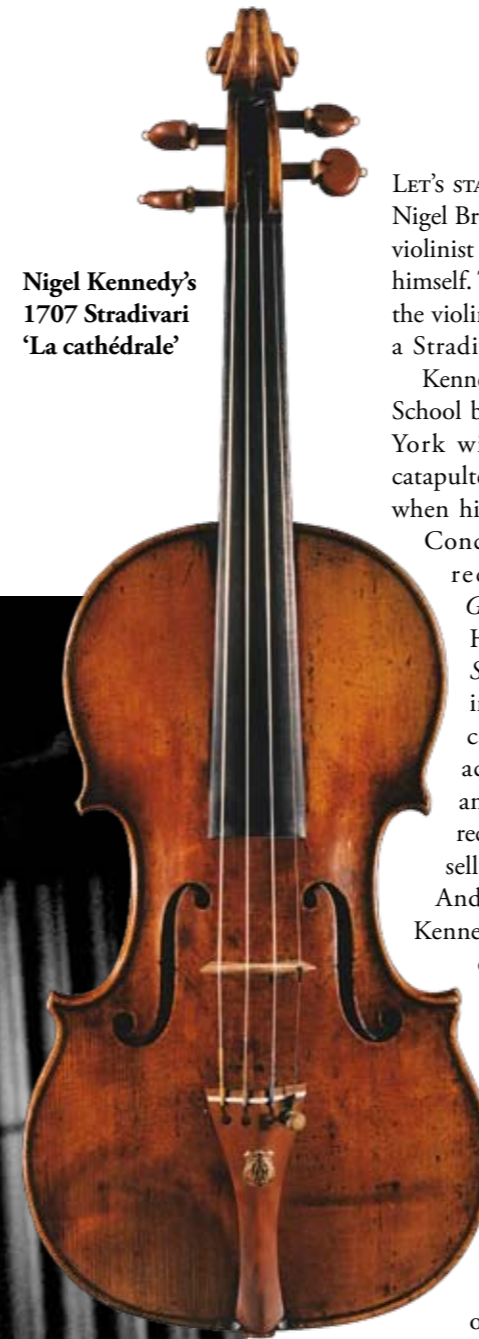
NIGEL KENNEDY

1707 'La cathédrale' Stradivari violin  
c.1735 'Lafont' Guarneri 'del Gesù' violin

# Nigel Kennedy



Nigel Kennedy's  
1707 Stradivari  
'La cathédrale'



LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING. IN 1985, Nigel Brown decided to help out a young violinist just starting to make a name for himself. That violinist was Nigel Kennedy; the violin Brown helped him acquire was a Stradivari known as 'La cathédrale'.

Kennedy attended the Yehudi Menuhin School before going on to study in New York with Dorothy DeLay. He was catapulted on to the international stage when his recording of the Elgar Violin Concerto was voted 1985's record of the year by *Gramophone* magazine. His disc of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (now celebrating its 20th anniversary) caused 'near-apoplexy', according to one critic, and has since entered the record books as the highest-selling classical album ever.

And then there's the other side to Kennedy: the one that sports a mohican and spray-paints his electric violin in the colours of his beloved Aston Villa. Kennedy is the Jekyll and Hyde of the classical world. His discography makes for fascinating listening, encompassing klezmer-inspired music and experimental jazz alongside Elgar and the now legendary Vivaldi disc. 'There's nothing out there musically that

I wouldn't like to try,' he says, 'except country. I hate it.' As Kennedy's career blossomed, Nigel Brown helped him acquire his next instrument, a c.1735 Guarneri 'del Gesù', and he is keen to express his gratitude for the support he has received over many years.

Kennedy recently declared that 'from now on, at least 50 per cent of my endeavour is going to be in the jazz field' and his latest album, *Shhh!*, makes good on that promise. His love affair with jazz began while he was still at school, when he was invited to play with jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli. Kennedy explains: 'Grappelli came to the school when I was 11 or 12, and that really turned me on to the possibilities of the violin in improvised forms of music.

Playing classical music, you have to think constantly about the ebb and flow of the architecture of a piece. Jazz is more about spontaneity.'

But ask him about his idol, Isaac Stern, and you glimpse a very different Kennedy: 'I used to drive everyone nuts at school listening to his recordings all the time. I love the purity of his sound. What other violinist made so many of the best recordings of so many concertos?' For all the bravado of his haircut and accent, and despite having nicknamed his 'del Gesù' violin

Kennedy nicknamed his 'del Gesù' 'Kylie' because, like the Australian diva, it is 'small and perfectly formed'

'Kylie' (because, like the Australian pop diva, it is 'small and perfectly formed'), Kennedy's technical exactitude has earned him comparisons with Russian virtuoso Nathan Milstein.

Kennedy is impatient with the limitations of genre: 'Music making's always about the excitement of communicating with the people you're working with on stage in whatever way that discipline needs.' In short, he is not one to let a little thing like years of tradition get in his way.

**Lizzie Davis**



Photo Paul Mitchell



LORRAINE McASLAN

1744 Carlo Bergonzi violin

SCOTTISH VIOLINIST LORRAINE McASLAN BELIEVES that a top-class performer must have a top-class instrument. Of the 1744 Carlo Bergonzi violin that a syndicate of contributors bought on her behalf, McAslan says, 'I feel it is expected of a soloist these days to be using an example of a master maker.' But, like so many other musicians, McAslan wouldn't have been able to afford the Italian instrument without Brown's help: 'I for one would never have had the opportunity of buying my Bergonzi unless I was a lottery winner.'

Now a teacher at London's Royal Academy of Music, as well as an honorary associate of that institution, McAslan initially trained in the capital with David Martin. At the age of 16, she says, 'I had the most amazing luck to play for Isaac Stern.' On his recommendation, she made the journey to New York to study with Dorothy DeLay at the Juilliard School. 'Up until then, I had been listening to recordings of Milstein, Stern, Heifetz, Neveu, Haendel, Oistrakh, Menuhin and Ferras to name but a few, and then more contemporary artists like Perlman, Zukerman and Kyung-Wha Chung, so it all fell into place as to where I should next study.'

McAslan has performed with all the great British orchestras, and when I ask which piece she would most like to play in the future, she replies: 'I'm not too sure. I have covered the vast majority of core repertoire but would like to carry on repeating my exploration.' Yet McAslan has always been keen to bring lesser-known music to light as well. 'I have made a strong commitment throughout my career to recording forgotten or neglected British repertoire of once-celebrated composers. I find it very exciting



Photo: Melanie Straver

to bring to life on disc music that is so deserving of being in the repertoire.' So McAslan has recorded Bridge, Leighton, Benjamin and Bantock – although she is the first to admit that finding opportunities for live performance of this repertoire can be more troublesome.

The first recording for which McAslan used the Bergonzi was the Britten Violin Concerto with the English Chamber Orchestra and Stuart Bedford. She admits to a feeling of tentativeness when she first played the instrument, 'but you soon get into the magic of discovering the sound of an instrument that has survived for centuries in other people's hands.' Such a great instrument, she says, also boosts her confidence: 'To be perfectly upfront, it was flattering to the ego.'

'To be perfectly upfront, it was flattering to the ego. The Bergonzi just made me feel glowing when performing'

The Bergonzi just made me feel glowing when performing.' McAslan now mostly plays a 1691 Andrea Guarneri violin, on loan from the Royal Academy of Music. But, as she points out herself: 'Each instrument feels different to play, but the player is the same, so their personality emerges through a different hue.' **Lizzie Davis**



Photo: Chris Frazer-Smith

# Lorraine McAslan



# Stephen Bryant

FRESH FROM A TOUR OF THE FAR EAST, AND WITH THE Proms fast approaching, Stephen Bryant is a busy man. The leader of the BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBCSO), Bryant has come a long way from the young pupil who refused to use vibrato: 'I didn't like the way it distorted the clear tone of the violin but my teacher, Mr Piper, told me that in order to take my Grade 6 exam I would have to do it. So, reluctantly, I did.' Despite having risen to the top of his profession, however, Bryant says: 'I never stop and think, "I've made it." I don't think I've ever looked

it impossible to describe.' Nor does he expend much energy thinking about the people who have played the violin before and those who will play it after him: 'Being a musician is all about the present – present practice and present performance. I don't like the thought of anyone else playing it. It's such a close relationship, a musician and their violin.'

Unsurprisingly, Bryant chooses the Royal Albert Hall as his favourite concert venue: 'The building has real dramatic impact and the concerts are always exciting because of the atmosphere engendered by the knowledgeable and enthusiastic Proms audiences. The orchestra is doing eleven Proms this year, all of them broadcast and many also televised.' But Bryant's musical pursuits range far beyond the Proms: his forthcoming projects include a Radio 3 broadcast of the Khachaturian Violin Concerto with Martyn Brabbins and the BBCSO, and a chamber music concert including Webern's Rondo for string quartet, Mendelssohn's Piano Trio in D minor and Schumann's Piano Quintet, broadcast from Seoul, South Korea.

Bryant also gets inspiration from a more unlikely quarter: 'Bruce Lee, the martial arts expert, has been an idol of mine for many years because, although he works in a different field, he developed himself through self-discipline, focus and drive to be the best he could possibly be.' Bryant even confides that he has a light punch bag in his music studio: 'I have to remember to take my boxing gloves off for the violin!'

**Lizzie Davis**

'Being a musician is all about the present – present practice and present performance'

at things from that sort of angle. I'm always looking ahead to my next concert or project.' Bryant's desire for, or as he calls it, 'obsession with' clarity of sound came from hours spent listening to recordings of Heifetz, aged eleven, and it has stayed with him ever since. Indeed, clarity of sound is one of the reasons that he prizes the Pressenda he now plays: 'The sound was the most important thing for me. My Pressenda has a clear, sweet sound with lots of natural overtones and good carrying power. The combination of the sound, its responsiveness and the feel of it under my hand makes it unique.'

It was the third violin he tried out at J.&A. Beare and he is now so comfortable with the instrument that he struggles to articulate what it's like to play: 'It's so familiar and so much an extension of me that I find



Photo Chris Frazer Smith





JACQUELINE ROSS

1570 Andrea Amati violin



Jacqueline

Photos Clive Tamman



JACQUELINE ROSS WAS HELPED BY THE STRADIVARI TRUST to obtain an exquisite Andrea Amati violin, dating from 1570 – making it the oldest instrument associated with the Trust. Fittingly, Ross herself also devotes much of her time to playing some of the oldest violin music around. ‘Over the past few years, I have concentrated on the music of Bach, who has always been a particular favourite of mine. I wanted to study the music from the point of view of violinists of his time, and spent some years in Amsterdam learning Baroque techniques and artistic aspirations.’ Ross has recorded two discs of 18th-century music for two violins with Baroque violinist Lucy van Dael – *The Italian Connection* and *The English Connection*.

‘Here was a very unusual instrument from Cremona that was in wonderful condition. It had all the hallmarks of the early Italian violins – golden, mellow, and warm’

Ross

What she finds most fascinating about her forays into the Baroque field is the discovery that ‘while violin technique, set-up, strings and bows have all changed dramatically, the communication of musical expression, character, and pathos has always been the most important goal for performers.’ Ross is fortunate to have the loan of Baroque and Classical bows from the Dodd Collection at the Birmingham Conservatoire, and a 19th-century bow by Pajot from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

New York-born Ross studied at the Juilliard School under Joseph Fuchs, and in Cologne with Saschko Gawriloff. But she also pays tribute to another influence on her playing: ‘One of my first teachers introduced me to Nathan Milstein, and I was able to sit in on some of his recording sessions and play for him, which of course was incredibly inspiring.’ Alongside her busy solo career, she teaches at the Guildhall School of Music in London and regularly adjudicates major competitions and leads masterclasses. In terms of her solo pursuits, Bach is her main focus at the moment and, having recorded all his works for violin, her current research will culminate in the production of an illustrated edition of the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin.

Ross has been playing the Amati since 1990. The search for the right one, however, took her and Charles Beare some considerable time: ‘I tried many Italian violins over months,’ she says. ‘Finally, the Andrea Amati

was flown over from the US, and I was immediately drawn to it. Here was a very unusual instrument from Cremona that was in wonderful condition. It had all the hallmarks

of the early Italian violins – golden, mellow, and warm – and had a depth tonally that I hadn’t previously found in any instrument. Particularly as I had begun to think about the Bach project, it seemed like the perfect instrument for me.’

Excitingly for Ross, she knows that the Amati was one of the first commissioned for King Charles IX: ‘I imagined some of the earliest compositions for violin being premiered on the instrument!’ This wonderful instrument now resides in the Chi Mei Foundation Museum in Taiwan.

Ross now plays a G.B. Guadagnini violin from 1777, but is offered the kind loan of her Andrea Amati by the Foundation for early music concerts and recordings. She remains grateful to the contributors to her violin trust for giving her that initial, crucial helping hand.

Lizzie Davis



# Lyn Fletcher



VIOLINIST LYN FLETCHER, leader of the Hallé Orchestra, was recently featured in *The Times* as one of the music world's unsung artistic heroes. Richard Morrison, the paper's chief culture critic, wrote: 'Great leaders play a huge part in

galvanising the orchestra, defining its sound and keeping up standards. They must be superb fiddlers and assertive personalities. Lyn Fletcher, who has led the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester for the past 13 years, is all that.' He went on to credit her with 'rebuilding its string sections with enthusiastic, vibrant young players in her own image' and said that Mark Elder, the Hallé's musical director, is 'the first to acknowledge that his orchestra is built on and around Fletcher'.

Having begged her parents for violin lessons, Fletcher took up the instrument at the age of three and studied with Eta Cohen during her teens. After a spell with the National Youth Orchestra, which she credits with fueling her passion for orchestral playing (and with which she now works as a tutor), she won a scholarship to study at London's

Royal Academy of Music with Manoug Parikian. As a young professional she was snapped up by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields where she began to build up her reputation as a soloist.

Fletcher has since appeared as soloist with the Philharmonia, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), London Musici, the Hallé Orchestra and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG). On two of these occasions Fletcher was premiering new works: she gave the first performance of Sally Beamish's Violin Concerto with the BCMG in 1996, and in 2000 she premiered Edward Gregson's Violin Concerto with the Hallé. Before taking up the mantle of leader at the Hallé, Fletcher had co-led the Philharmonia and the CBSO.

She is now lucky enough to own the 1685 violin by Pietro Guarneri of Mantua that she acquired through a syndicated instrument trust in 1993. The instrument has helped Fletcher considerably with her brilliant career. Her discography ranges from Shostakovich to Vivaldi with some Vaughan Williams in between. One reviewer called her interpretation of *The Lark Ascending* 'fleetingly evanescent'.

Her discography ranges from Shostakovich to Vivaldi with some Vaughan Williams in between

And her disc of Vivaldi concertos was also critically acclaimed. According to *Gramophone* magazine, 'Lyn Fletcher brings detail and plenty of light and shade to Vivaldi's often virtuosic writing.'

After considering her achievements it is difficult not to reach the same conclusion as Richard Morrison – that 'in the orchestral world conductors nearly always steal the limelight'. Without the tireless work and commitment of Fletcher and other leaders like her, however, the musical world would be a blander place.

Lizzie Davis





KRYSIA OSOSTOWICZ

1720 Francisco Gofriller violin



Photo Chris Frazer Smith



# Kryisia Osostowicz

'I always had to struggle to be heard and the Gofriller suddenly gave me ease of projection, without any loss of quality or subtlety'

The feeling that she has reached the pinnacle of her profession, however, is fleeting: 'It comes and goes. Occasionally when a concert has gone particularly well, or a recording has been appreciated, or an award has unexpectedly been given – then I feel that way. But it's very ephemeral, and the work always has to start again the next day.' This will usually be with some solo Bach, 'as a way of touching base'.

Osostowicz plays a Gofriller violin that, rather inconveniently, came along at approximately the same time as her first child: 'I was just thinking that it was now time to put the music on the back burner. But the Gofriller gave me a huge burst of new inspiration, motivating me to play more than ever before. Thankfully my husband and children fully support my musical activities.'

She describes playing the Gofriller as 'like double cream. The first time I played it, 15 years ago, I felt excited: a whole new world of possibilities was opening up, and within my reach. I had played for the previous 15 years on a lovely Sancto Seraphin, given to Menuhin by Enescu. However, I always had to struggle to be heard and the Gofriller suddenly gave me ease of projection without any loss of quality or subtlety. But it took me fully ten years to get used to this.'

One thing that Osostowicz particularly values about her Violin Trust is that she has not only acquired a wonderful instrument but also a group of friends and supporters: 'In the process of buying the instrument, you also form a sort of community with your investors and this gives you an invaluable support network.'

Unfortunately, when she bought the Gofriller 15 years ago, she was not allowed to know the identity of the previous owner. 'I would love to know more about other players who used this wonderful instrument before me, and would be grateful for any information on this.' Such an interest in the violin's past perhaps partly explains Osostowicz's own attitude to the instrument: she does not think of the violin as hers. Instead, she quotes Ivry Gitlis' maxim, 'This isn't my violin; I'm just one of its violinists.'

**Lizzie Davis**

ONE OF VIOLINIST KRYSIA OSOSTOWICZ'S FAVOURITE PLACES TO perform is a tiny Methodist Chapel in the Cornish hamlet of Trebulet. 'It has no history of concerts but is a wonderful, intimate place to hear music, with an ideal acoustic. This perfect, small and unadorned building inspired me and my quartet to start our own festival, the Dante Summer Festival.'

Polish-English Osostowicz attended the Yehudi Menuhin School – 'Menuhin was a musical father to me through school years' – before attending Cambridge University. She then travelled to Salzburg to train with Sándor Végh. After some years with the piano quartet Domus, she is now the leader of the Dante Quartet, which she founded in 1995. She is also principal violinist of the ensemble Endymion, and teaches at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama.





SOPHIE TILL  
1732 Gagliano violin

*Sophie Till*



Photo F. Lammot Berlin Arts Scholarship

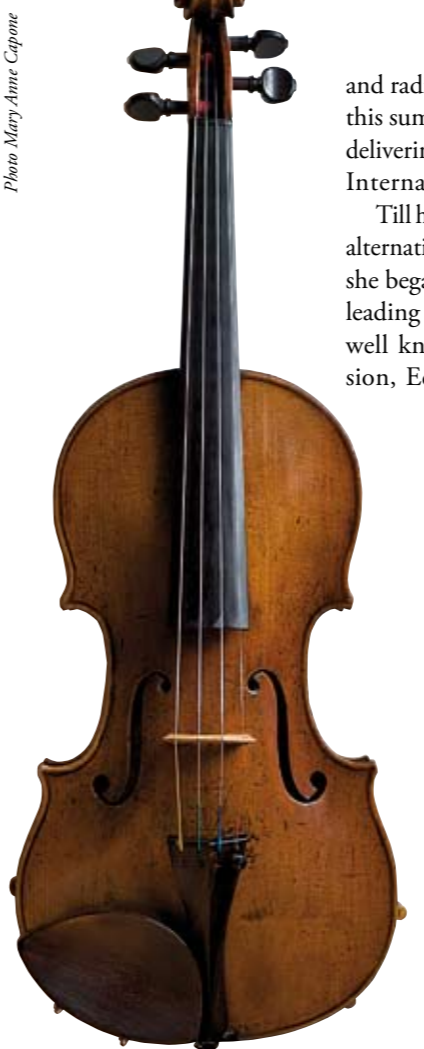


Photo F. Lammot Berlin Arts Scholarship

Photo Mary Anne Capone

VIOLINIST SOPHIE TILL has reflected at length on why she decided to pursue a musical career. 'With music so much part of the scenery, there was no real sense of becoming a musician – it was such an integrated process. Music and growing up are inseparable when you spend so much time playing music. It was more the reverse, that the practising and performing provided the therapy that led me to an awareness of being more human.' Till studied at London's Royal Academy of Music, and enjoyed a highly successful performing and teaching career in the UK and Europe before moving the focus of her activities to America. She teaches, performs regular recitals

and radio broadcasts with pianist Ron Stabinsky, and this summer she will expand her reach still further by delivering a series of lectures at the Golandsky Institute's International Summer Symposium at Princeton. Till has recently become increasingly interested in an alternative approach to violin pedagogy. Three years ago she began working with pianist Edna Golandsky, the leading exponent of the Taubman Piano Technique, well known to pianists. Till says: 'In the first session, Edna solved a violin problem in a matter of

minutes. I quickly realised that here was an approach that could not only identify and itemise the often invisible movements that underlie a virtuoso technique, but the way that the movements interact and go into music making at the highest level. Through the Golandsky Institute I saw a pedagogical approach that had been developed to a phenomenal level of clarity and had a power to communicate that I had never seen before. While the geography and look of the violin are different, the laws governing coordinate motion to play the instrument are the same.'

But the need for a fine instrument cannot be avoided, however rounded a musician's technique may be. Till initially secured a J. Hill violin through a syndicated trust, which she was eventually able to purchase herself. She has now moved on to another instrument, a very fine Gagliano, which she acquired in a similarly gradual manner thanks to the patience of another music lover, Gael Francais. Till recognizes just how important the ability to acquire her first instrument was in helping her to reach this goal: 'Without the Trust I would not have been able to make that next move to the Gagliano and I am very grateful for both opportunities.'

Till's Gagliano is a constant delight to her. 'The first time I played it, it was just like meeting my husband. It made me come out in goose pimples!' She continues, 'It can do anything, which is wonderful fuel for the imagination and opens up limitless possibilities.'

'The first time I played it, it was just like meeting my husband. It made me come out in goose pimples!'

Either way, Till is keen to stress her utmost respect for her instrument, and voices the philosophy that underpins her self-awareness: 'To know that its life will far outreach my own, and that

my relationship with it, while important to me, is but another transition for the violin, is a very humbling concept. I'm sharing in the continuum and that is a special connection through time.'

**Mark Austin**



# Steven Isserlis

WORLD-RENOWNED CELLIST, COMPOSER, CHILDREN'S AUTHOR and director of the International Musicians' Seminar at Prussia Cove: Steven Isserlis' biography reads like an entry in the *Who's Who* of the classical world. He has performed across the globe with the world's greatest musicians and orchestras but has said, 'I rather presumptuously consider the Wigmore Hall in London to be my musical home.'

Isserlis has also been awarded a CBE but he is far from complacent. He has been astonishingly frank about his insecurities and has admitted his fear of Bach's Cello Suites: 'The thought of recording them struck me as terrifying.' But record them he did, to phenomenal critical acclaim. *Gramophone* magazine called the CD a 'seminal' recording and chose it as instrumental disc of the year. It also won the critics' choice award at the 2008 Classical Brits.

Despite this success – or perhaps because of it – Isserlis has not forgotten the helping hand he was given by Nigel

'Classical music needs listeners more than players, and when a child discovers how to listen to music it can be incredibly enriching'

Brown and the contributors to his Cello Trust. On his website he thanks the trust – 'the group of generous people' – who helped him purchase his 1740 Montagnana cello, which he calls a 'strong and full-voiced' instrument.

He now also performs on the 1730 'De Munck' Stradivari, an instrument once owned by the great cellist Emmanuel Feuermann. Yet while the Stradivari is only on loan (much to Isserlis's dismay), he can now call the Montagnana his own. Isserlis also part-owns a 1745 Guadagnini cello. There is even a recording of a duo by Martinů, on the album *Cello World*, on which Isserlis played two cellos – with a little help from modern gadgetry.

Having been lucky enough to come from a musical family – 'we all play and still play' – Isserlis devotes much of his time and energy to educational projects and teaching for those who have not been given the same opportunities: 'I am appalled at how intimidated people are by classical music. It should not be that way.' Isserlis also says: 'We need listeners more than we need players, and when a child discovers how to listen to music it can be incredibly enriching for the rest of their lives.' To this end, he has written musical stories for children, recorded an album named *Children's Cello* and gives frequent masterclasses for older students.

Like many of his musical colleagues, Isserlis bemoans the astronomical price of the tools of his trade. Calling the situation 'a tragedy', he has said: 'For today's performers the greatest instruments have reached a market value that is outside the grasp of almost any player.' And yet musicians continue to search for instruments that match their individual personalities, much as they always have done. As Isserlis remarks, 'The qualities that attract a player to an instrument are no more easily defined than those that attract us to our human partners.'

Lizzie Davis

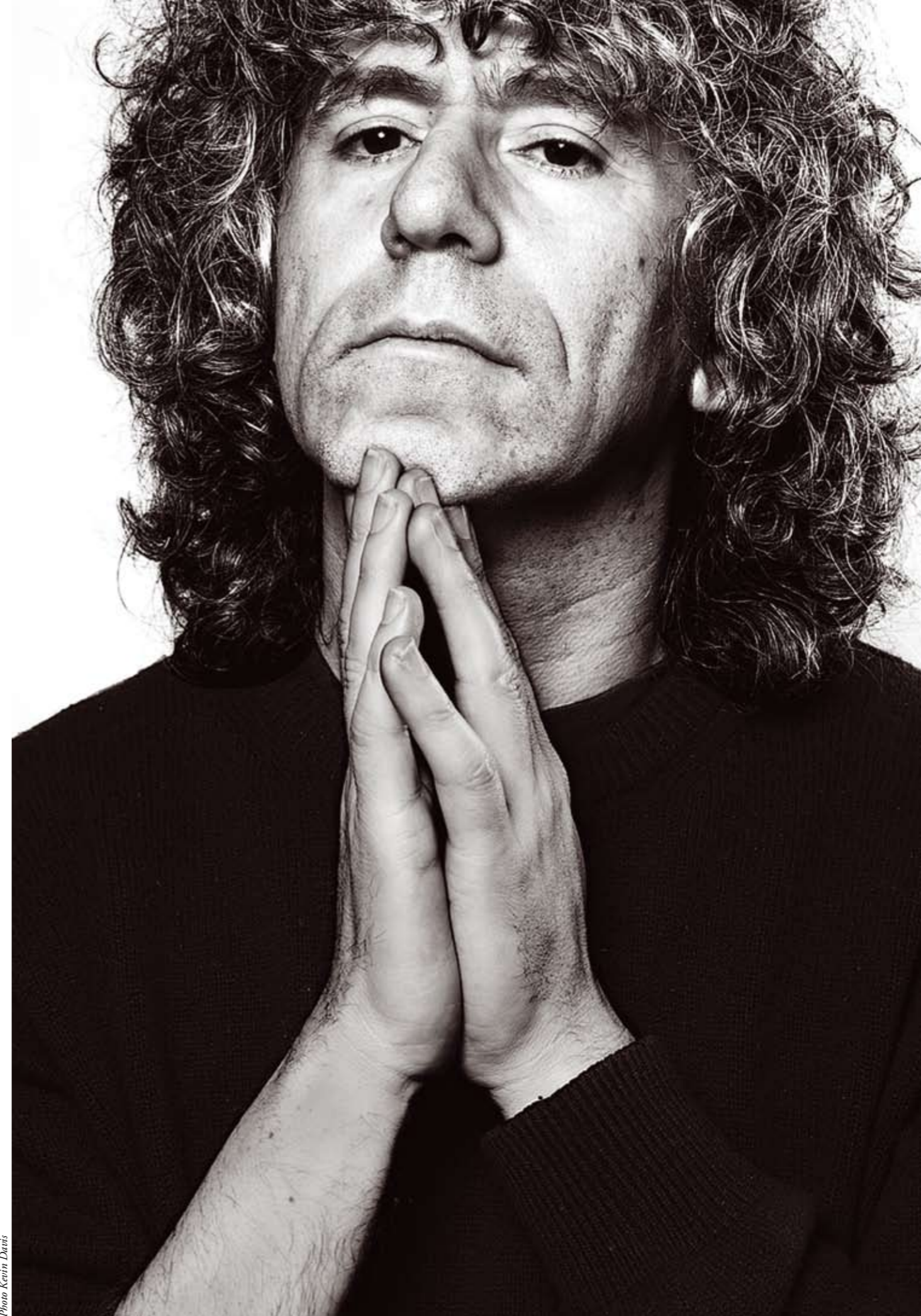






Photo Alastair Morrison

CELLIST MATTHEW BARLEY'S MUSICAL interests are probably best described as eclectic. Having played with Kogi Native Americans and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Barley is something of a thorn in the side of what he calls 'classical music snobs'. Despite having gone down a fairly orthodox training route (Chetham's, the National Youth Orchestra, Guildhall), Barley's career since has been anything but traditional. He recently curated the Xtreme Cello festival at London's Kings Place and has thrown himself into the world of improvisation. It comes as no surprise, then, that he raises eyebrows in certain circles.

The cello he plays, and now owns, thanks to his Cello Trust, was made by J.C. Gigli in around 1770, a time before DJs or reggae. But when asked which kind of music his cello suits, he responds, 'It has a fantastic sound for funky bass lines, especially pizzicato.' For Barley, the cello is not just a classical instrument: he sees no reason to limit it with this label.

So how did he find it? 'I was in Beare's and had just tried and been unimpressed by a Pietro Guarneri for £850,000, and then I picked up this cello by Gigli, who

'All the big decisions in my life I make practically instantly – I suffer much more trying to decide which T-shirt to wear'

I had never heard of. I played three notes (from the cadenza of the Rococo Variations), and knew I was there – I had found the cello I wanted.' This sudden decisiveness is not unusual, Barley tells me: 'All the big decisions in my life I make practically instantly – I suffer much more trying to decide which T-shirt to wear, or which kind of tea to have.'

Barley seems both mystified and fascinated by the process of choosing an instrument. 'There must be certain physical things about the nature of a player's arms and how they interact with the physical properties of an instrument,' he muses, 'but also I think we all have a sound in our head that must be a composite of hearing ourselves and others play, and is our ideal sound. When you pick up a cello and it makes that sound – you're sorted.'

There is a slight dent in his contentment with the Gigli cello: neither he nor Beare's knows much about its history. All he knows is that it was made in Rome to be played in a marching band – there's a little peg in the back that gives this much away. 'I would so love to

know which little Italian cellist was marching around the streets of Rome with that cello!' Barley pauses. 'I nearly called it "my" cello, which of course it is for a while, but you can't take it with you when you go, as they say, so where will it be then? Will it be looked after lovingly? If it could speak it could certainly tell a tale – but then again, maybe it can. And maybe its way of speaking is simply its sound, which tells the story of the centuries it has lived through.'

Lizzie Davis



Photo Chris Frazer Smith

Instrument photo J.C.G.A. Beare

Matthew  
Barley



# Daniel Bell

DANIEL BELL PLAYS A NICOLÒ AMATI VIOLIN MADE C.1650–84. He says: 'I'd love to know the history of everyone who's played it in the past. It was made even before Bach was born, so the list of past owners must be long and fascinating. I was attracted to it because

of its bright but warm sound, which makes it perfect for classical repertoire. Having said that, the first piece I played on it was Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto! It's also a small violin, so very comfortable for me.'

Bell has been immersed in playing since he joined a Suzuki method class by chance,

aged four. He is an alumnus of Chetham's School of Music, the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and the Cleveland Institute of Music. He has taught at the summer academy for the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, and for eight years he was a member of the Petersen Quartet, with which he appeared at festivals in Salzburg, Gstaad, Edinburgh and Rheingau.

In 2008 he was a jury member in the string quartet category at the ARD International Music Competition in Munich – did this position on the other side of the table make him feel he'd arrived as a musician? 'I think that's an ongoing process – I still work at it every day,' Bell replies.

He appreciates the security of his Violin Trust: 'Having a terrific violin has been an advantage and a pleasure to me at every stage. And it's a comfort to know that I won't have to give up the violin at some point – that's always the worry with instruments on loan.'

Bell's attitude towards the ever-escalating price of string instruments, however, is matter-of-fact: 'Obviously most fine instruments are out of the reach of those who need them, but the number of really fine old violins is so small, and of course not getting any bigger, that I suppose it's inevitable.

I don't ever really feel overawed by my violin – at the end of the day it's a professional tool, to be treated with normal precautions.' After a pause, he adds, 'Of course, I wouldn't leave it uninsured!'

Since taking up his current position in the second violins of the Berlin Philharmonic, Bell has been fast discovering the particular challenges attendant with this role: 'A second violinist must have the ability to switch in an instant from one function to another: for example, from playing in octaves with the first



violins or accompanimental figures with the violas, to bringing out his own melodies.'

But playing with the Berlin Philharmonic is far from being an ordeal: 'In my very first concert with them I already had the feeling that I could play and make music exactly as I'd always wanted to do in an orchestra. The astonishing standards of my colleagues are a constant inspiration.'

**Lizzie Davis**

'I'd love to know the history of everyone who's played it in the past. It was made even before Bach was born, so the list of past owners must be long and fascinating'





PRIYA MITCHELL HAS BEEN DESCRIBED BY *The Strad* as 'one of the foremost violinists of her generation'. In the year 2000 she founded the Oxford Chamber Music Festival. The idea was 'to establish an annual get-together of friends and musicians from all over the world for rehearsals and performances'. The festival, now in its tenth year, has garnered plenty of critical acclaim. The title of this year's event is 'White Nights – Music from Lands of Fire and Ice'. Mitchell explains: 'The programme draws music from many countries of the Northern Lights and juxtaposes works we all know and love, such as the Tchaikovsky Piano Trio, Sibelius's *Voces intimae* Quartet and Borodin's Quartet no.2 with lesser-known pieces by great composers, such as the Magnus Lindberg Clarinet Quintet, Glinka's Grand Sextet and Brustad's *Fairytale Suite*.'

Mitchell explains why the festival has a very different dynamic to most: 'Some of us have worked together before and others haven't, which gives the concerts a spontaneous, freshly-cooked dynamic – it's an exciting mixture of risk-taking and trust.' One critic claimed that the festival 'really put Oxford on the map of the classical music world'.

'My Balestrieri is not just a love affair but the love of my life – I can't imagine playing another violin'

As well as directing the festival, Mitchell is currently focused on her upcoming recording of Dvořák's chamber music with piano, with Polina Leschenko, Maxim Rysanov and Natalie Clein later this year. The disc will be released in the autumn.

Mitchell studied with David Takeno at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Zakhar Bron in Germany. She was subsequently chosen as the British representative in the 'Rising Stars' series of the European Concert Halls Organisation and has been compiling an impressive CV ever since.

She has given recitals in Paris, New York, Frankfurt and

# Priya

Vienna, and in 1998 she made her major London concerto debut, playing the Sibelius Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Yuri Temirkanov. But her personal highlights include playing Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* with the Sinfonia Varsova and Yan Pascal Tortelier at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, and Walton's Violin Concerto with Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In August 2003, she made her Australian debut in the form of a nationwide tour of the country with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. But it all started, she explains, 'because of the promise of chocolate and ballet lessons' in exchange for taking up the violin.

Mitchell plays on an instrument by Tomaso Balestrieri, made in Mantua in 1760. She is utterly devoted to it: 'My Balestrieri is not just a love affair but the love of my life – I can't imagine playing another violin or instrument and am grateful beyond words to have been given the support to keep it for as long as I play.'

Lizzie Davis



# Mitchell



'A CHEER WENT UP FROM THE PLAYERS WHEN the orchestra's board chair announced that Christopher Warren-Green will be their next leader,' trumpets the website of the Charlotte Symphony. Conductor Warren-Green, who will take over as music director in September 2010, is clearly a conductor with the rare ability to earn respect from an orchestra while remaining true to his own musical convictions.

One reason for this may be that he first rose to prominence as concertmaster of London's Philharmonia Orchestra. Nigel Brown helped him acquire a Guarneri violin, and he remains grateful for the assistance that enabled him to meet the

many musical challenges that confront an orchestral leader with a reliable and worthy instrument under his chin. A conducting career has always been in the pipeline, though: Warren-Green has directed the London Chamber Orchestra since 1988, and the ensemble is still going strong today. Before that he was honoured to receive a personal invitation from Prince Charles to conduct the first concert in modern times in the throne room at Buckingham Palace, and he has since performed on numerous occasions for the royal

family, both in public and in private. He now works regularly with orchestras around the world, and has an enviable discography that bears testament to his musical achievements.

'Conducting is the most privileged position anyone could have,' says Warren-Green. 'It's the easiest thing in the world to do badly, and it's the hardest thing in the world to do well. But it certainly is the best job.' He displays

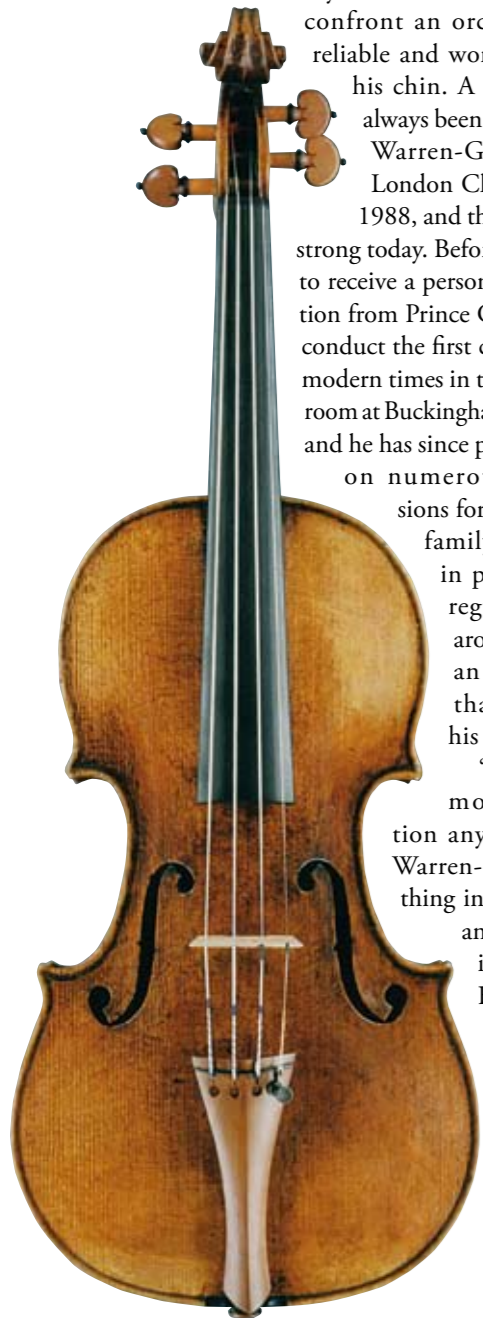


unstoppable enthusiasm, coupled with a deep sense of responsibility; a combination that will surely be put to good use in Charlotte. First violinist Calin Lupanu suggests that he won the job by not only being 'a very seasoned musician', but also having the right personality for the orchestra. 'He's a charmer,' said Lupanu. 'He knows how to talk to people. He's very convincing.'

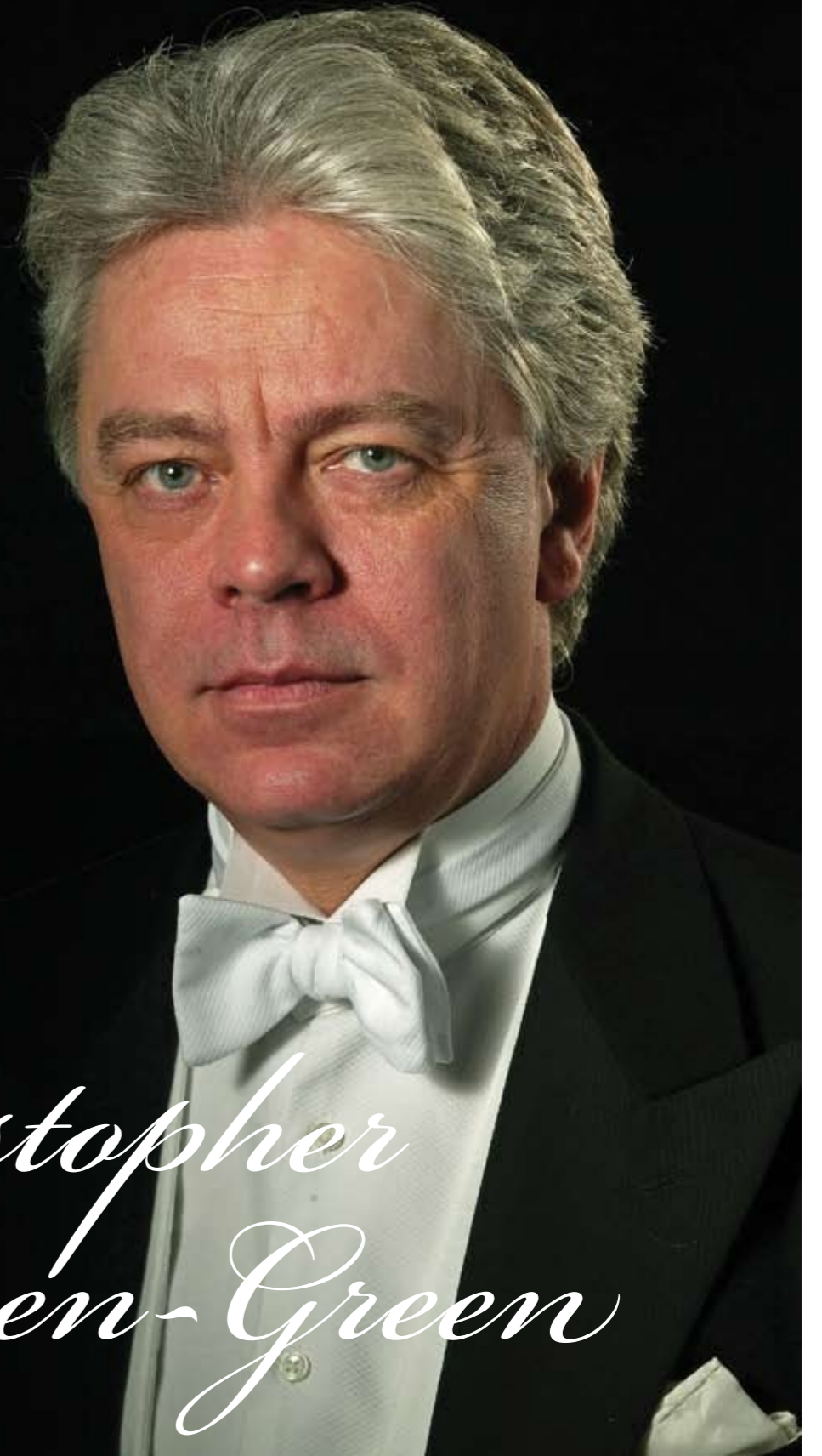
'Conducting is the most privileged position anyone could have'

Talking to people is something at which Warren-Green excelled while coaching on *Maestro*, a recent BBC programme that extended the drama of reality TV to the world of conducting. Relishing the chance to communicate his passion to his celebrity pupil Jane Asher, and to the wider public watching at home, Warren-Green is clearly committed to promoting the cause of great music in the public consciousness. He will soon move to Charlotte with his family to prepare for his new challenge—a decision that speaks volumes about his dedication.

**Mark Austin**



'It's the easiest thing in the world to do badly, and it's the hardest thing in the world to do well'



*Christopher Warren-Green*

Photo: Kevin Davis



Gabrielle Lester with her colleagues Robert Max and James Kirby in the Barbican Piano Trio



# Gabrielle Lester

'I DIDN'T EXACTLY DECIDE TO become a musician – it was decided for me when my father bought me a violin as a present for my third birthday.' According to violinist Gabrielle Lester, growing up in a musical household meant that playing an instrument seemed as natural to her as 'reading or walking'.

After studying at the Yehudi Menuhin School, London's Royal College of Music and in Salzburg with Sándor Végh (one of her idols), Lester worked as principal second violin under Simon Rattle at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. It was in fact Rattle who put her in touch with Nigel Brown, enabling her to secure the 1670 Rugeri violin that she has been playing for the last 15 years.

Violin dealer Peter Biddulph united Lester and her Rugeri: 'He understands my sound and what violin I prefer. He brought the Rugeri out of the display cabinet. I played it and that was it, love at first sight. It is a mellow-sounding violin with great depth, and the sound projects very well. It's strong and powerful in any hall and overcomes most acoustical problems as it has an acoustic all of its own. Every note I play is helped by having my Rugeri.'

Lester says the instrument is best suited to chamber music, to which she devotes most of her time. Indeed, the first piece she played on the instrument was Brahms's Piano Trio no.1. But she also insists she enjoys playing anything put in front of her. 'When I play music from a certain composer I enter their world – the expressive language of each composer is different and interesting. I enjoy playing



the music of Michael Nyman – I'm a member of the Michael Nyman Band – and I have enjoyed playing with Pete Townshend. If I had to choose a favourite, I think it would be Beethoven as the repertoire for violin is enormous and wonderful.' She is about to embark on a trip to Canada in which she will be performing two Beethoven quartets and coaching at the Domaine Forget International Music and Dance Festival.

Her Rugeri dates from 1670, and this is important to Lester, who believes that considerations of history are central to the musician's art. 'We are in a profession where history is always important: the history of the composer, of the violin and of violin

playing itself. You can't really perform without an awareness of that.' Her gaze also turns towards the future of her instrument: 'I do think about the people who might play it after me. I think that having played this violin for 15 years I have opened up the sound and made it ring nicely for the next person who plays it.' But she adds, 'I'm not ready to let anyone else play my violin at the moment!'

**Lizzie Davis**

'We are in a profession where history is always important: the history of the composer, of the violin and of violin playing itself. You can't really perform without an awareness of that'



JOHN METCALFE

1800 Ceruti viola

John

Metcalfe

'I HAVE NEVER FELT OVERAWED BY THE Ceruti – just excited and extremely privileged to have it to play.' John Metcalfe, violist with the Duke Quartet, plays a viola made in 1800 by Giovanni Battista Ceruti. He decided to become a musician at the age of nine, as a result of a bet: 'I was paid 2p by a girl at primary school for playing the opening bars of Joplin's rag *The Entertainer*. This meant I only had to top up the fee by 1p to get an iced bun at break time. I never looked back.'

After this unique beginning, Metcalfe has become one of the most adventurous classical musicians around. He names Brian Eno, Kraftwerk and Stravinsky as his idols, has worked with Morrissey, the Corrs and Blur and is currently one of the artistic curators at the new London venue Kings Place. He's even going to be making an appearance soon at the Hollywood Bowl.

But in spite of his involvement with modern-day pop and electronica, Metcalfe has great respect for what one might call the more traditional colossuses of classical music: 'I think I have had more moments of intense elation with Beethoven's incredibly human music than with any other composer. In fact, I would like to take up the violin for a couple of days to play first violin in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony!'

'I was paid 2p by a girl at primary school for playing the opening bars of Joplin's rag *The Entertainer*. This meant I only had to top up the fee by 1p to get an iced bun at break time'



As anyone who has heard Metcalfe's recordings will know, Bowie is as strong an influence on this progressive artist as Bach. His debut record was described by *Billboard* magazine as 'a solo debut that crosses all manner of boundaries'. And at the heart of all his music lies the Ceruti: 'The sound is beautifully clear and strong on the C string, ruby rich on the G and D, and passionate on the A.' On top of that, the shape of the instrument is just right: 'It's not a big viola and the stop is just how I like it. So the first time I played it I knew this was the one I had to have. I get from the Ceruti what I put in. Other violas I have played feel a bit like hard work to get the right colour or timbre and they don't project nearly as well. The sound of the Ceruti feeds me.'

The first piece he played on the instrument was Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet with his colleagues in the Duke Quartet at the Flanders Festival. 'We also performed Kevin Volans's *Hunting: Gathering* which is full of viola solos. It had a huge impact on our sound and the musical dynamic in the group changed. Despite being the violist they now had to take me seriously,' he quips.

Metcalfe's work with the Duke Quartet, which he started in the late 1980s, is known for its commitment to contemporary music: the group recently recorded Steve Reich's *Different Trains* and the players frequently commission new works. But at the heart of this passion for the contemporary lies Metcalfe's devotion to an instrument which is centuries old.

Lizzie Davis



NATALIE CLEIN

1777 'Simpson' Guadagnini cello  
Grand Adam bow



'When you play the Guadagnini, it invites you to search for the golden centre of the sound of the instrument'

Photo Sussie Ahlburg

# Natalie Clein



Photo Sussie Ahlburg

NATALIE CLEIN PLAYS THE 1777 'SIMPSON' GUADAGNINI cello, an instrument that, she points out, is 230 years older than she is, 'possibly to the day!' Since being crowned BBC Young Musician of the Year in 1994, aged 16, Clein has been bolstering her CV by working with conductors like Andrew Davis, Heinrich Schiff and Mark Wigglesworth. For her most recent recording, she chose the Elgar Cello Concerto, which she has set out to make her own. The recording has garnered significant critical acclaim, despite the looming spirit of Jacqueline du Pré. In a recent interview Clein said, 'The shadow is there, and so it should be. But that's out of my control. All I can control is my approach to the piece and my performance of it. It's impossible not to be influenced by a figure like du Pré. Her recording with Barbirolli is stunningly beautiful; but it's a moment of history that can't be repeated, and you shouldn't try to copy it.'

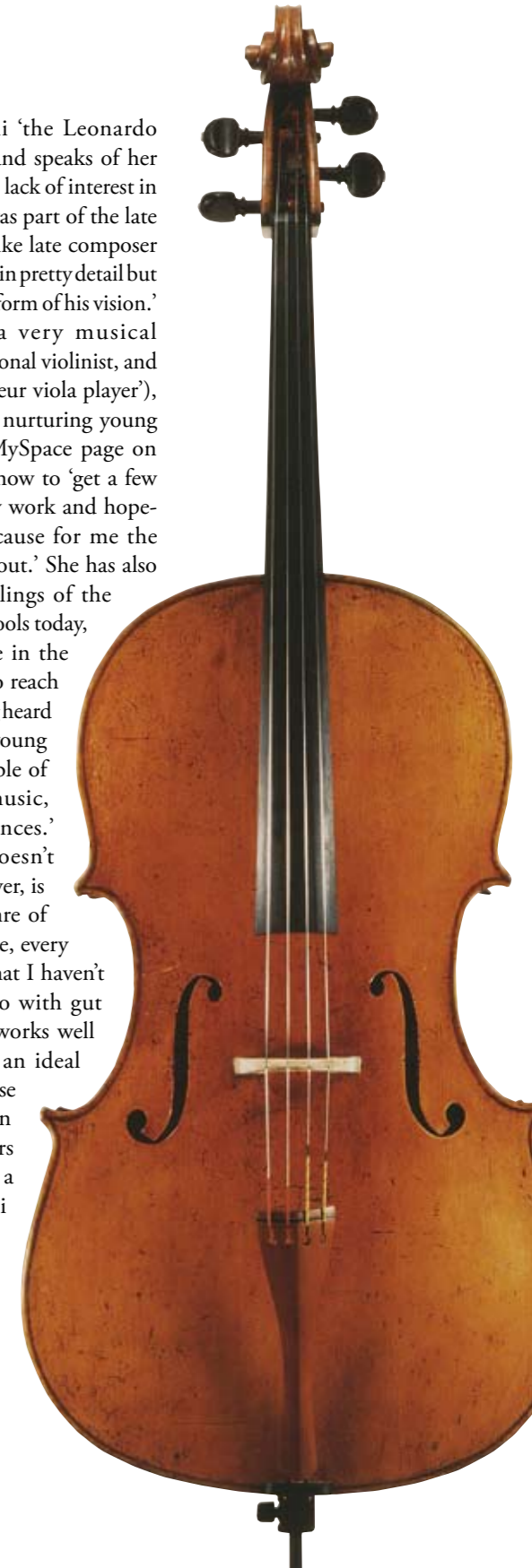
The Elgar Concerto was, in fact, the first piece she played on the Guadagnini. 'The first thing that attracted me to the instrument was its golden quality – to look at and to play. When you play it, it invites you to search for the golden centre of the sound of the instrument. There is a focus to the sound – like a beam of light.'

Clein calls Guadagnini 'the Leonardo da Vinci of cello makers' and speaks of her fascination with the luthier's lack of interest in superficialities: 'The cello was part of the late work of Guadagnini and, like late composer geniuses, he wasn't interested in pretty detail but only in the pure essence and form of his vision.'

Having come from a very musical family ('my mum's a professional violinist, and my dad's a passionate amateur viola player'), Clein is enthusiastic about nurturing young talent. She has her own MySpace page on which she enthuses about how to 'get a few new people listening to my work and hopefully coming to a gig, because for me the live event is what it's all about.' She has also aired her views on the failings of the national curriculum: 'In schools today, classical music has no role in the curriculum – it's possible to reach music A-level without having heard the name Beethoven. But young people are more than capable of responding to classical music, given the right circumstances.'

One thing she now doesn't have to worry about, however, is her cello. It suits every genre of music and even, she tells me, every acoustic: 'The only thing that I haven't done yet is string the cello with gut for some Bach, but Bach works well on steel too. The cello is an ideal concerto instrument because of its focus and power in big halls. But it also flowers in dry acoustics, which is a blessing.' The Guadagnini has, she says, been a gift for her musical life and career: 'I try to treasure every moment with it.'

**Lizzie Davis**





MATTHEW TRUSLER SAYS HE INTENDS TO BE BURIED with his violin. Given that the instrument in question is the 1711 'Wooldridge' Stradivari, perhaps this is only to be expected. When I ask Trusler what attracted him to the violin, he suggests that's like asking, 'What first attracted you to your millionaire husband?'

'It is incredible to play. You can play quietly and be heard, play loudly without forcing. Really, if you do things that sound nasty

'It is incredible to play. You can play quietly and be heard, play loudly without forcing. Really, if you do things that sound nasty on a Stradivari you have only yourself to blame.'

One of the main reasons he prizes the instrument, however, is that thanks to his Violin Trust he can rest assured that he can keep it: 'I think the key is knowing that I won't have it taken away, as that is a very stressful thing to contend with as a musician. Now, when I work on a piece, I know that the next time I play it, it will be on the same fiddle.'

To complement his violin, Trusler uses a bow that once belonged to Heifetz, given to him by philanthropist Herbert Axelrod.

Trusler's musical idols range from the traditional (Heifetz) to the surprising (Michael Jackson). Since graduating from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music in 1998, he has performed with orchestras around the world, toured Germany with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Neville Marriner, and Mexico with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Martyn Brabbins, but he claims that the most nervous he's ever been was during his wedding. He set up the record label Orchid Classics in 2005 and teaches at the Malmö Academy in Sweden.

Trusler's future projects include recording trio repertoire with Lawrence Power (see page 42) and Simon Crawford-Philips, and a recording of *Porgy and Bess* for violin and orchestra with Carl Davis in Abbey

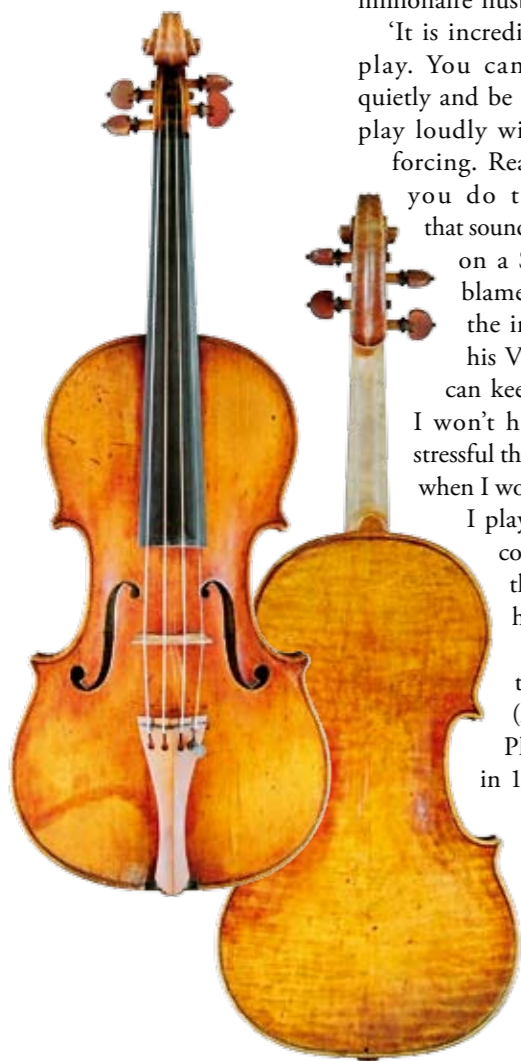
Road – something that Trusler says will be 'very exciting' for him.

Despite his impressive CV, Trusler is extremely frank about the strains of being a musician.

In a wonderfully imaginative article on his website, he draws a parallel between live performance and childbirth: 'I mean that you forget, completely, just how stressful something was almost as soon as you finish doing it. I can be standing backstage, swearing blind to all who will listen that I have had enough, and that a life of simple pleasures was all I ever really wanted, and I can't imagine how I ended up doing something so silly and so stressful. And 29 minutes later I'm busy explaining how my only real sadness is that I don't play a concert every day.'

Trusler isn't too preoccupied with his instrument's past, though he concedes: 'When you stop and look at it, it is quite awesome to be holding something that has seen three centuries of history, and was made long before Mozart was even born.' Next year will be a special anniversary for him: 'It's the violin's birthday – I'm trying to think of a suitable way of celebrating a 300th anniversary.'

Lizzie Davis



Matthew



Trusler



1610 Antonio Brenzi viola  
Joseph Henry bow

# Lawrence

LAWRENCE POWER IS THAT RARE thing – a high-profile violist. After studying at New York's Juilliard School, he won first prize in the Primrose International Viola Competition in 1999 and was

awarded a place on the BBC New Generation Artists Scheme in 2001. Since then, he has played with orchestras and chamber music ensembles around the world (he is a member of the Leopold String Trio and the Nash Ensemble). But when I ask what his forthcoming projects are, he replies: 'The birth of my first baby!' In terms of musical events, though, Power will be performing at the Proms and the Verbier Festival, James MacMillan is writing a viola concerto for him, and he will be the Bergen Philharmonic's artist in residence next season.

Power is an extremely versatile performer, equally happy playing Mozart or Hindemith. The challenge, then, was to find an instrument that could match his chameleon-like character: 'Finding a viola that is equally at home in chamber music as it is in big halls with orchestras is very difficult. But I feel that my Antonio Brenzi viola manages to combine these two sound worlds.'

When he first started playing the Brenzi, though, the

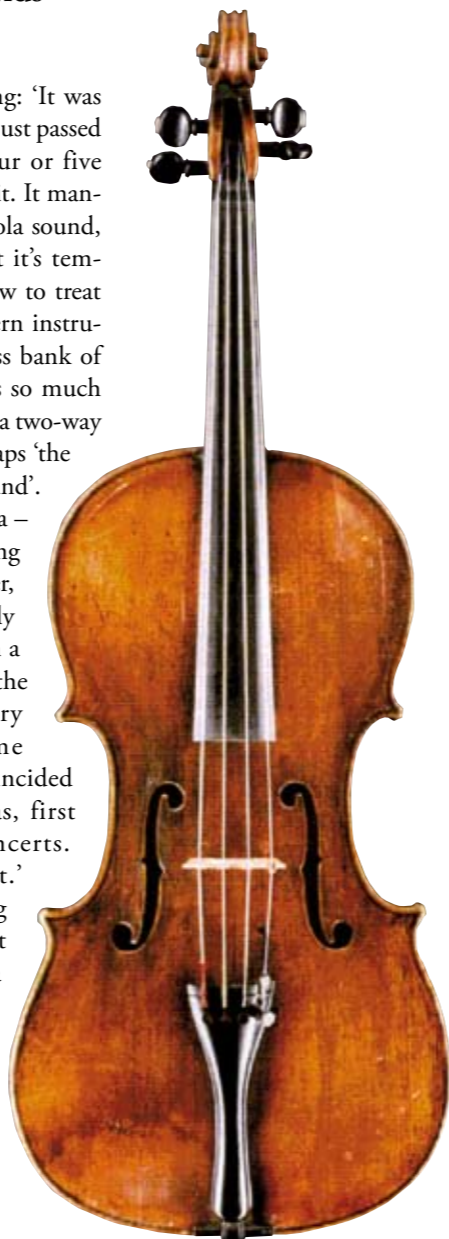
'Finding a viola that is equally at home in chamber music as it is in big halls with orchestras is very difficult, but the Brenzi combines these two sound worlds'

experience was not all plain sailing: 'It was like driving a Porsche when you've just passed your driving test. It took me four or five years before I came to terms with it. It manages to combine both the deep viola sound, and the sweeter, higher side. But it's temperamental: you have to know how to treat it. It's harder to play than a modern instrument. But my viola has an endless bank of colour you can access, and there's so much personality in each note.' Yet this is a two-way street: Power also muses that perhaps 'the viola has taken on some of my sound'.

Temperamental or not, the viola – and the Stradivari Trust – came along at just the right moment for Power, as he is keen to stress: 'I feel strongly that having a fine instrument with a unique voice is so important at the beginning of a career. I feel very fortunate that my viola came into my life when it did – it coincided with my debuts with orchestras, first recordings and important concerts. I certainly benefited from that.'

The responsibility of looking after a 400-year-old instrument does prey on his mind: 'My viola dates from 1610 so the history this instrument has experienced is mind-boggling! I must say, I do feel a responsibility that I'm merely a custodian of it, and hopefully it will last a long time after I'm gone.'

Lizzie Davis



# Power







Photo Pascal Gély

# Jonathan Cohen



Photo Stephen Page

CELLIST AND CONDUCTOR JONATHAN COHEN IS fortune's darling. After finishing university (he went to Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music and Cambridge University), he says, 'I didn't exactly know what I should do at this point in my life.' But it didn't take him long to establish a career path: after stints as principal cellist in two major London orchestras, he has also played with the London Haydn Quartet (which he founded), the King's Consort, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Gabrieli Consort, to name but a few. He is currently working as an apprentice conductor to William Christie and often works with Christie's own ensemble, Les Arts Florissants. Hard work must play a large part in Cohen's success, but somehow he manages to make his

ascendant career appear effortless: 'Being a musician is about making music and enjoying that social experience of discussing ideas and making sounds together. I've done that since I was 8 years old, first at Pro Corda playing chamber music and then forever since.' He is currently focusing on Monteverdi, whom he calls 'an innovative genius of precision and expression' and forthcoming projects include playing in the Kaposvar Chamber Music Festival in Hungary: 'The programming is exciting and varied, from Vivaldi to Prokofiev, and I'll learn a lot from playing with some great artists.'

Cohen acquired his 1712 Guarneri cello in 2005, through a syndicated instrument trust, and says it has helped his career enormously: 'Playing the Guarneri has given me new possibilities. It has a rich and complex tone that has opened up a new sound world to me and helped me to imagine new colours in music making.' But when he first tried to play it, the result was confusing: 'I knew here was something special and luxurious, but I didn't know how to make it work properly. It is a unique personality. That's what happens, I think, when you play old Italian master instruments. Eventually, I found myself in it.'

Happily, Cohen has discovered that the Guarneri is as versatile as his musical tastes: 'I've played Dvořák and Shostakovich in the Wigmore Hall and with a few tweaks and set-up changes, I recorded Vivaldi concertos in Cadogan Hall.' Cohen has a special interest in period performance, so it's hardly surprising that he's fascinated by the cello's history: 'I love imagining the culture of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the Hills' book on Guarneri you can find quoted letters between Monteverdi and Galileo about the best place to get a decent violin.' He grins before adding, 'Monteverdi recommended Cremona, of course, although he adds that they take

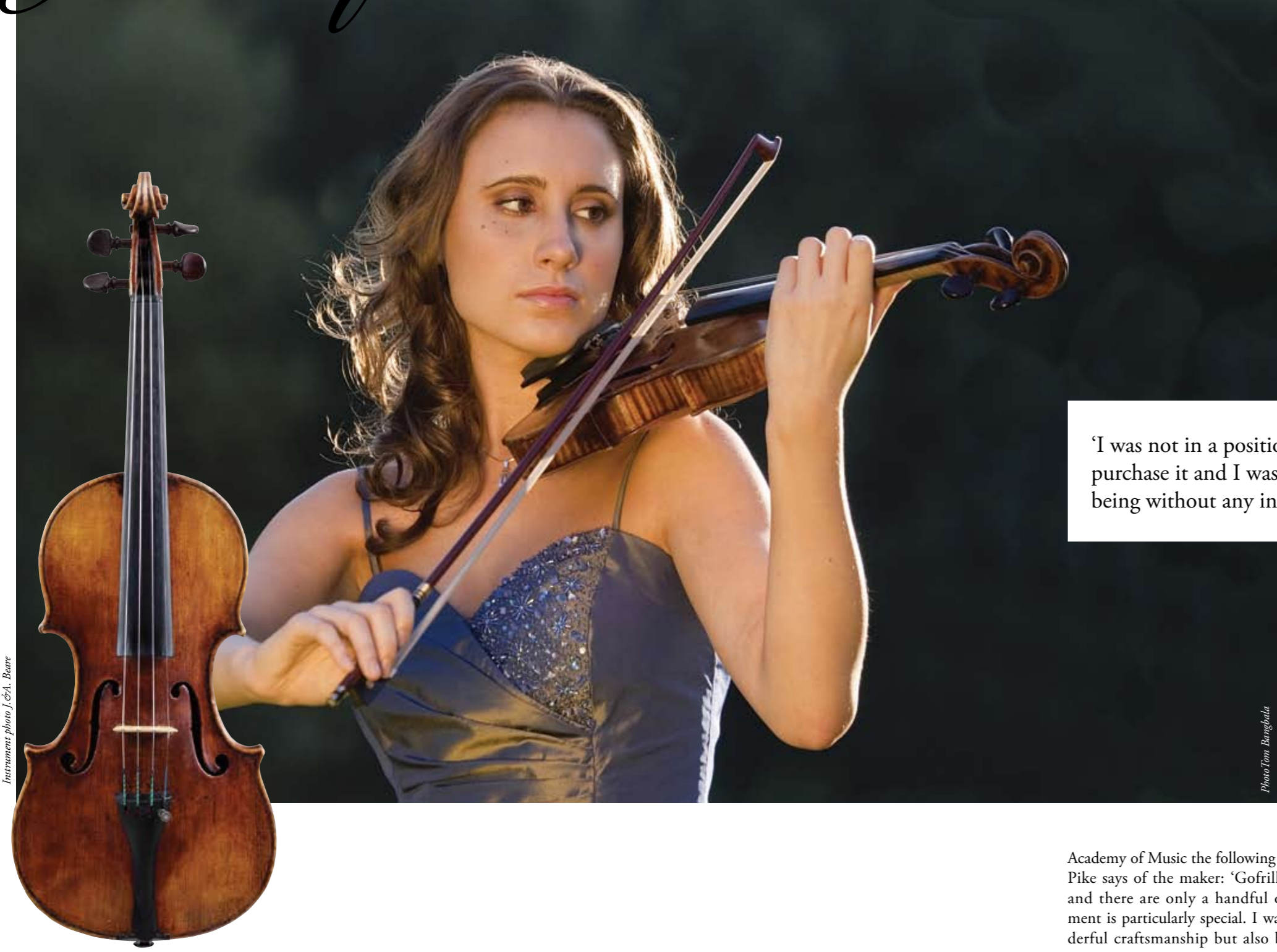
their time there to make an instrument, and it costs a little more. It's also interesting that strings cost nearly as much as an instrument. The art of string making was really important and fast-changing innovations were happening everywhere, in art and science.'

**Lizzie Davis**

'I love imagining the culture of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the Hills' book on Guarneri you can find quoted letters between Monteverdi and Galileo about the best place to get a decent violin'



# Jennifer Pike



Instrument photo J. & A. Beare

Photo Tom Bangshala

JENNIFER PIKE HAD GAINED MORE PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE BY THE TIME SHE WAS 15 than most aspiring musicians had had hot dinners. Yet she insists that becoming the youngest ever BBC Young Musician of the Year aged 12, in 2002, was just a marker: 'Winning was an exciting stepping stone in my career, but I feel that the process of becoming a musician is a gradual one that takes an entire lifetime.'

Pike attended Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, where her father, Jeremy Pike, is head of composition, and made her debut with the Hallé Orchestra aged 11 and her Proms debut, playing solo Bach, aged 15. She then went on to study with David Takeno at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama for a master's degree in performance and is currently studying for an undergraduate degree at Oxford.

She shot to fame playing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in the Young Musician of the Year final, but Pike is also passionate about contemporary music: 'I find that audiences are becoming increasingly receptive to new ideas and I find it thrilling to be part of the creative process – the Icelandic composer Hafliði Hallgrímsson is writing a

'I was not in a position to raise the funds to purchase it and I was in the desperate situation of being without any instrument for several months'

new concerto for me and I am greatly looking forward to giving the premiere and recording it soon.' Touchingly, this enthusiasm for contemporary music also encompasses a passion for her father's own compositions, and Pike is hoping to give the premiere of the violin concerto that he's currently working on.

For the famous Mendelssohn performance, Pike performed on the 1718 'Maurin' Stradivari, but it had to be returned to the Royal

Academy of Music the following day. She now plays a 1708 Matteo Gofriller. Pike says of the maker: 'Gofriller is especially renowned as a cello maker and there are only a handful of his violins in existence, so this instrument is particularly special. I was immediately struck not only by the wonderful craftsmanship but also by the warmth of its amber tone quality.'

Pike was given the instrument on loan, in 2002, but after four years the owner was forced to sell. She explains: 'I was not in a position to raise the funds needed to purchase it and I was in the desperate situation of being without any instrument for several months – even relying on a fellow student to lend me his violin for a Wigmore Hall concert in 2007. After that performance, I happened to mention my situation to some sympathetic members of the audience. A few



Photo Andrew Farrington

days later I was amazed to hear that those audience members had generously saved the Gofriller themselves and were working with Nigel Brown to set up a new scheme!

Pike accepts the high price of stringed instruments as an inevitability: 'The quality and craftsmanship that have gone into making stringed instruments are priceless. As string players we therefore have to rely on the generosity of others in order to be able to have the use of such instruments. I hope that this beautiful Gofriller will continue to be heard in concert halls for many centuries to come.'

**Lizzie Davis**





# Graham

# Mitchell

THE FIRST TIME GRAHAM Mitchell played his double bass three years ago, it was a bittersweet experience. The instrument had belonged to one of his first teachers and good friend, Corin Long. 'When he died, his estate got in touch with me to tell me that his Italian bass was for sale and asked if I would be interested in buying it. The first time I played it as my own was quite an emotional event. The bass was great to play but I was wishing that it was still Corin's bass and I was just borrowing it.' Mitchell is hugely grateful to the contributors to his Double Bass Trust for helping him secure the use of such a personally significant instrument.

The instrument was made c.1750 and is attributed to the Testore family. Mitchell was with Long when the older player was considering buying it: 'We were in Cologne and were taking turns playing the instrument while the other went out into the hall to listen. I told him I was a little bit jealous because the bass sounded amazing!' Being able to own the instrument himself has made a huge difference to Mitchell's life: 'When someone is passionate about their profession and then is given the best tools for that profession, you're given the freedom to express yourself. And that is a wonderful feeling.'

Mitchell has played with the Philharmonia Orchestra since 1999. His inspirations range from Brahms – 'his writing for the bass in his four symphonies is fantastic' – to Ray Brown – 'all great musicians who have a beautiful sound are very inspiring'. Mitchell is also a professor at London's Royal Academy of Music (RAM) and was made an associate of the RAM for outstanding



achievement in the music profession in 2002. But that doesn't mean he's going to relax: 'There are some great projects coming up with the Philharmonia,' says Mitchell, 'including staged performances of *Tristan and Isolde* in Lucerne and London. I'm also doing some guest principal work with various orchestras around the country, some great summer chamber festivals and next year I'll be touring with the Takács Quartet and Imogen Cooper.' The piece he'd most like to play is Wagner's *Ring* cycle – with the qualification, 'I think once will be enough!'

Bottesini's *Reverie* was the first piece he played on his bass: 'It was great to play Italian music on an Italian bass. It suits all kinds of music, but I love using it for chamber music. It has this deep, rich Italian sound which when required can cut its way through anything and then in the next second be one of

'The bass can cut its way through anything and then in the next second be one of the softest sounds around'

the softest sounds around. I've never experienced that before in other basses I've tried.'

Despite his personal connection, it's not just the instrument's recent history that is important to Mitchell: 'I love to think that for most of the pieces I perform now, the bass was playing them for the first time 200 years ago. I feel lucky to be part of the chain – I hope the people who play the bass after me have as much fun as I'm having.'

**Lizzie Davis**



# Jamie Walton



CELLIST JAMIE WALTON HAS BEEN playing on a 1712 Guarneri since 2006. And it was love at first touch: 'Within five minutes I sensed the palette I needed to express, with a sound world that matched all that I instinctively envisaged since childhood. The attraction was pivotal, sacred and final.'

Only five days after taking possession of the cello, he recorded

And then, in 2006, came the Guarneri. It was like, he says, 'a dam bursting in the studio'. A debut in London's Kings Place last month followed hot on the heels of performances with the Philharmonia, as well as a forthcoming recording of sonatas by Brahms, Strauss and Thuille. But one project which Walton is particularly enthusiastic about is the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival.

Taking place in August, this festival was set up by Walton himself and is now in its second year.

'Even when playing the ukulele aged seven, I instinctively asked for a bow'

the Elgar and Myaskovsky cello concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra. There is a sense of conviction and certainty to Walton: intuition has always been his guide. 'Even when playing the ukulele aged seven,' he says, 'I instinctively asked for a bow. It was clear then I wasn't meant for strumming, so aged eight, I met the cello. My fate was sealed.'

Aged 11 he 'thought nothing' of playing Mendelssohn and Chopin on the piano and since graduating from Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music, Walton has been steadily making a name for himself.

Walton credits the Guarneri, acquired with the help of the Stradivari Trust, with helping him 'find my voice, my sound. In that sense, the scheme and the instrument have changed my life – or rather affirmed it.' The instrument, then, is all-important: as Walton dryly points out, 'You can't win Wimbledon with a wooden racket.' But when asked what it feels like to play, language fails him: 'It is beyond words. The vibration goes through every chakra and it is the expression of a higher consciousness, of one that is raised.' Like Walton, his cello 'relishes the Romantic repertoire'. And just as he cites two very different composers, Dvořák and Bach, as his 'all-time favourites', his Guarneri is 'incredibly versatile and equally suited to Bach suites and Shostakovich's Cello Concerto no.1.'

Despite the age and value of his cello, Walton stresses that he is never scared by it. 'I look after the instrument with all my protective passion. If you are overawed by something you'll never discover its true potential.' He even suggests that one reason for the strength of the bond between him and his cello is the structure of the trust scheme itself. 'It deepens the bond because you know, if you're committed to it, you'll make the sheer devotion and effort to take ownership by whatever means over the years to come. That creates a kind of marriage.'

Lizzie Davis



Photo Chris Frazer Smith

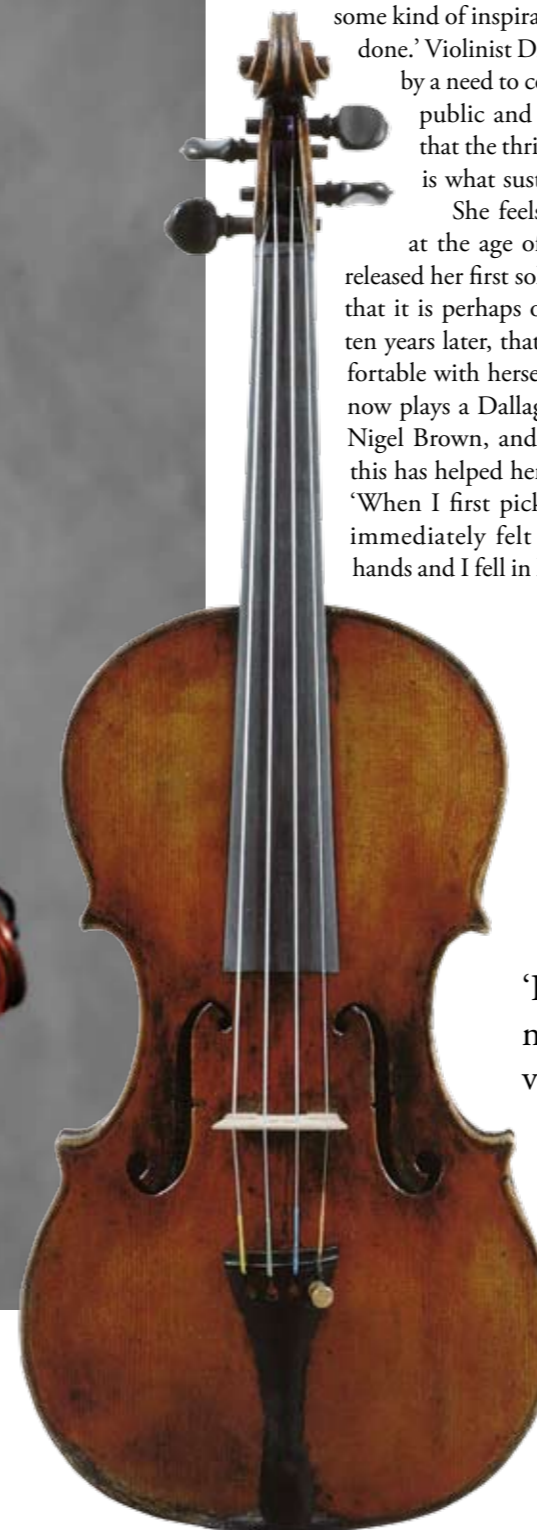
Photo Wolf Marlob



# Diana Yukawa



‘When I first picked up my violin, it immediately felt comfortable in my hands and I fell in love with its tone and colour. It’s a little on the smaller side, which suits me perfectly’



‘I ALWAYS SAY IF THERE IS JUST ONE PERSON in the audience that feels something from my performance, can change their view on something even for a split second, or find some kind of inspiration – then my job is done.’ Violinist Diana Yukawa is driven by a need to communicate with her public and isn’t afraid to admit that the thrill of live performance is what sustains her as an artist. She feels she was discovered at the age of thirteen, when she released her first solo album, but admits that it is perhaps only now, more than ten years later, that she feels truly comfortable with herself as a musician. She now plays a Dallaglio violin, thanks to Nigel Brown, and is in no doubt that this has helped her find her own voice: ‘When I first picked up my violin, it immediately felt comfortable in my hands and I fell in love with its tone and

‘Performing non-classical music was scary, but my violin was my rock’

colour. It’s a little on the smaller side, which suits me perfectly – instead of taking months to adjust, it took minutes. As soon as I started playing it, I didn’t want to stop. Finding your instrument is just like finding your partner. You have to fit together, have the magic spark, undeniable chemistry and a good balance. I could never imagine being without my violin now I have found it. It’s incredibly beautiful and I’m still completely in love with it.’

Finding this special instrument helped Yukawa realise that she wanted to explore alternatives to a mainstream career as a classical soloist. Like most of her violinist colleagues she lists Heifetz as an inspiration, but is happy to mention dance artists Massive Attack as well. Her violin also helped her cope with the numerous challenges of a switch in direction. ‘Performing non-classical music was daunting and scary, but all the time my violin was my rock. So many people I meet who don’t have a vast knowledge about classical music comment on its beautiful sound.’

She has recently launched a new album of her own compositions, *The Butterfly Effect*, and is hard at work producing her first music video. ‘I love mixing multimedia and I’m so excited to do my first video. We’re still at an early developmental stage, but I love the different kind of creativity that is required when making a visual story to the music.

Combining music with visuals is something I would love to develop further in my live performances.’

Yukawa looks forward to performing Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* this summer at the ever-popular Kenwood House Picnic Concerts Series. ‘I prefer playing outdoors to indoors, as it feels really organic and connected to nature, which

I feel enhances the energy in my performance. The Vivaldi is a perfect choice for the setting – let’s just hope it doesn’t rain!’

**Mark Austin**



'Inspiration comes equally from many aspects of life, including movies, painting and people around me'



# Alicja

'I ALWAYS DREAMT OF PLAYING the violin; that was the only choice for me even when I was five. Since then I've never had a thought of doing anything else in life.' So says the determined Polish-born violinist Alicja Smietana. Following studies in the Krakow Academy

and at the Guildhall in London, she now enjoys a busy international career while studying further with Christian Tetzlaff.

Smietana hopes to acquire a violin by Camillus Camilli with the help of Nigel Brown and the Stradivari Trust, and has also received Nigel Brown's support in acquiring a worthy bow to match. Understandably, she is keen to talk about the difference this has made to her. She feels she embarks every day on a voyage of discovery. 'At last I don't need to think about any limitations and I can concentrate purely on creating music. Up until now I was always hearing comments like, "It was great, but you need to get a real instrument."

'The moment I touched the violin I knew it was the right one for me. It amazed me with its responsiveness and possibilities. It feels incredibly natural and comfortable. I've had the opportunity to perform on it several times now, and I'm getting incredibly positive feedback.'

Smietana is very much in love with the instrument and this relationship no doubt gives her the energy she needs to sustain a very full diary. At the time of writing she has recently toured Europe with Nigel Kennedy, another artist to have benefited from a syndicate scheme. Like Kennedy, Smietana has little concern for the stuffy



traditions of classical music. She names Gidon Kremer, with whom she has played on a number of occasions, as her 'violin idol number one'. Kremer is another artist wedded to unconventionality in the service of great music. 'My inspirations also come from other types of music, which I listen to just as much, like jazz – my father is a brilliant jazz guitarist – and other great artists like Lennon and McCartney. In my case inspiration comes equally from many other aspects of life, including movies, painting and people around me.'

The same unashamedly non-conformist approach is evident when Smietana is asked whether she has thought about the background of her instrument. 'I don't think we need to pay attention to the actual history as long as we feel that we can create something special. Of course it is very inspiring to know that some amazing musician played the instrument in the past and it certainly brings a great, positive energy into the process of working on a piece of music.'

So it is the present that matters most of all. But what does she hope to achieve with her new instrument in the next few years? 'At the moment it's such a joy for me to be able to play it that I think I will need some time to calm down before I start thinking about the future.'

**Mark Austin**

# Smietana





ALEX REDINGTON

1708 Tononi violin



Alex

# Redington

PICTURED AGAINST A BACKDROP OF GRAFFITI-splashed masonry, Alex Redington makes quite an impression. The portraits of the Doric Quartet, which he leads, help them stand out in a competitive, densely populated environment. It's clear that Redington's life is dominated by their recent successes. He details the impressively busy diary of the group with calm focus. 'We have just embarked on a recording contract with Chandos and our debut CD of the complete Korngold quartets will be released in September. We have tours planned of New Zealand and the US and further recordings with Chandos, including Bartók, Schubert and Schumann quartets. We're also looking forward to playing with Kathryn Stott in the summer in Siena, Italy, and with Piers Lane in New Zealand.'

Asked to name his favourite composer, Redington considers Beethoven to be the master of them all: 'His music for string quartet has never been surpassed both in musical depth and the skill of composition. I could quite easily spend the rest of my career just playing these pieces.' He knows

that the Tononi violin he plays thanks to the Stradivari Trust is perfectly suited to this repertoire, but what delights him particularly about the instrument is its versatility. 'The first concert I played with this violin was with the quartet and it was a programme of Haydn, Janáček and Beethoven in Tokyo. It was fantastic to discover that the violin was capable of finding the right sound for any repertoire. You can use a very light, fast bow in classical repertoire and also dig deep into the string in music such as Bartók. It seems to have so many possibilities in terms of colour, and within the quartet I am able to blend into the ensemble sound as well as cut through with ease when necessary.'

Redington is grateful for the opportunities afforded by his Violin Trust. 'It is an amazing feeling to think that I may possibly own the violin one day. This is something that I never really thought could be

'The violin has so many possibilities. I can blend into the ensemble sound as well as cut through with ease when necessary'

possible, so it gives me a particular fondness and attachment to the instrument, knowing that it could be a life partner.'

So what does the future hold? 'The thing that I am most looking forward to doing with the quartet is the complete Beethoven string quartet cycle. It's a little way off, though, as we have only played eight of them so far!' With a few more years in the group's schedule as busy as the current season, it surely won't be long until this goal is reached.

**Mark Austin**



Photo: Hanyu Chlida



# Madeleine

MADELEINE EASTON IS ONE OF THE NEWEST additions to the Stradivari Trust flock, having recently acquired a Grancino violin with its assistance. 'The instrument itself didn't look that different next to the other instruments there for me to try, all laid out on the table at Beare's,' says Easton. 'I even played much more expensive instruments than the one I eventually chose. But the minute I put bow to string in that room, on that day, with that violin, something truly wonderful happened. Everyone who was there went silent, mouths fell open and that was it. That instrument had grabbed me and got inside me, and I was never going to be the same.'

Easton was born in Sydney and was a member of the Australian Youth Orchestra before being accepted to join the Australian Chamber Orchestra, which she describes as a turning point in her career. She now performs as a soloist, leader and director for orchestras in Australia and Europe.

Easton cannot name a favourite composer: 'I play music from so many different periods on so many different instruments at all kinds of different pitches. Each composer has their own individual harmonic language and sound world.' She does, however, have a particular passion for Baroque music, so is unsurprisingly enthusiastic about her current project, a Bach cantata series at London's Royal Academy of Music. 'It has been absolutely amazing getting the opportunity to study the scores, prepare the orchestra and then bring it together with the choir to create performances of these amazing works.' But with a recording of Schubert's complete works for violin and piano also on the horizon (with Daniel Grimwood), her schedule is nothing if not varied.

More so than many musicians, Easton feels a deep sense of duty to her audience – 'to understand the music as much as possible, prepare it to the very highest standard possible, and deliver a performance worthy of

the composition.' One can't help admiring her attitude, but you can hear something of the pressure she puts herself under when she says, 'It is constant but wonderful work.'

Nerves are also something that Easton has to battle against: 'I wish I was one of those musicians who are able to walk out on stage and not be fazed at all, but in some respects I think it means I also feel the music more.

Perhaps the performance won't be absolutely perfect, but my performance will be an honest one, straight from me to the audience.'

However, Easton maintains: 'There is no greater job in the world. It sounds mundanely simple to say that all I do is play my violin, but there is so much I can give by doing so. I play every note as if my life depended on it, as it is my duty to do.'

**Lizzie Davis**

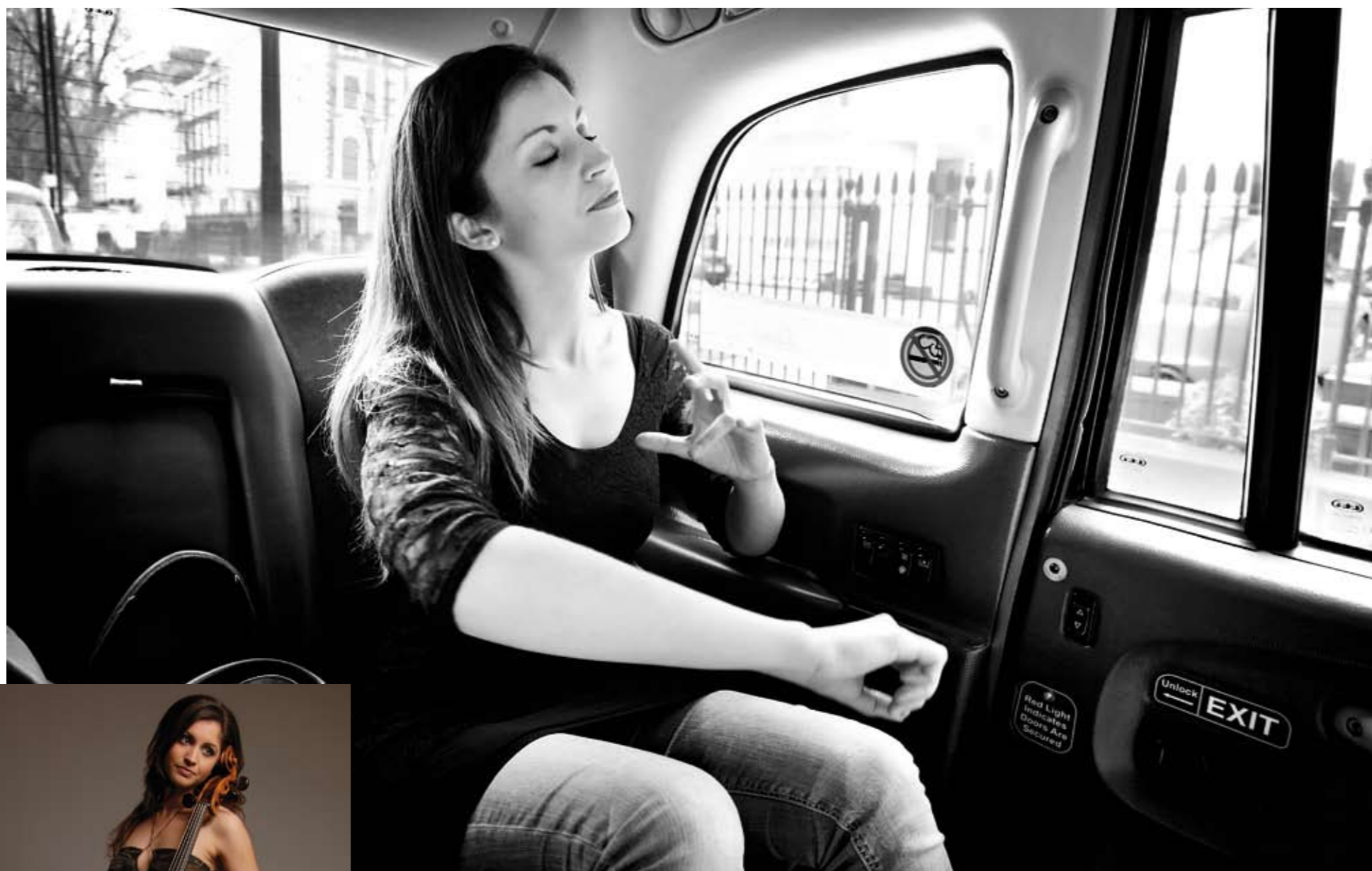
'It sounds mundanely simple to say that all I do is play my violin, but there is so much I can give by doing so'



# Easton







# Jessica Hayes



Instrument photo David Perri

Photo Chris Frazer-Smith

Hayes is particularly attracted to Shostakovich: 'I never get bored of playing his music and every time I am moved by the intensity and darkness of his works. His symphonies are some of the greatest works ever written. I find his Cello Sonata is like a journey and every time I play it I sense audiences are always instantly involved because of the extreme changes of mood and style within one sonata.'

'The wonderful thing about a great instrument is that the sound is always maturing and is able to adapt as you do'

She has wanted to be a cellist ever since she was taken to the ballet at the age of three: 'I sat on the front row by the orchestra pit and knew then that I wanted to play the cello.' It's no surprise that she feels very close to the Grancino cello she currently plays thanks to her

CELLIST JESSICA Hayes is conscious that her favourite concert venue is unusual: 'I actually really enjoy giving recitals in people's houses.

The closeness is more personal and I love feeling really engaged with my audience.' She adds, 'It is always really exciting playing in great concert halls though.' Despite her relative youth, Hayes has had considerable experience of both, following studies in Paris and at London's Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. She was talent-spotted by the London Philharmonic Orchestra's 'Future Firsts' scheme and is now enjoying an apprenticeship with the Hallé Orchestra, alongside regular chamber music performances and appearances in a duo with an accordionist – a combination that always delights audiences.

Cello Trust: 'I felt immediately attached somehow to the depth and grain in the sound. It resonated beautifully and I just wanted to carry on playing and playing. Your instrument is your voice. The wonderful thing about a great instrument is that the sound is always maturing and is able to adapt as you do. I feel supported by my instrument and it gives me all the tools to be able to express the messages I feel that the composer and I want to deliver.'

Hayes speaks of her cello with a noticeable love for its idiosyncrasies: 'It's a really individual-looking instrument with great character. It has a knot on the front which is really unique and as well as having a beautiful, dark and richly-coloured wood there are also interesting marks on it that make it look different from any other cello I have seen. It's also the original size for a cello of that age and hasn't been cut down so the belly of the cello is really wide and the sound has great depth.'

An intimate relationship with an instrument that stands out from the crowd: what could be more suited to a musician who wants to reach out to every listener, whether in a private recital or cavernous concert hall?

**Mark Austin**



# Kate Gould

Kate Gould with her previous cello, a Lorenzo Ventapane

‘To cover the late Beethoven string quartets with the right companions is a dream that continues to linger.’

AS ONE OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE Leopold String Trio, cellist Kate Gould has seen the group win the Borletti Buitoni Trust Award and the Royal Philharmonic Society’s prestigious chamber ensemble award, and receive nominations for two *Gramophone* magazine awards. But she still confesses to a touch of ‘string quartet envy’. She admits: ‘To cover the late Beethoven string quartets with the right companions is a dream that continues to linger.’

While the trio’s career is in the ascendant, however, that is where her focus lies. Currently in the middle of recording Bach’s Goldberg Variations, Gould and her Leopold Trio colleagues Lawrence Power (see page 42) and Isabelle van Keulen will also be touring Germany and Austria in November with pianist Paul Lewis, followed by Italy and France in February.

Gould has also pioneered an annual chamber music festival, with pianist Daniel Tong, in her home town of Winchester, which takes place each April: ‘I always look forward to playing to the warm, loyal audience we’ve built up there.’

Having followed her sister Lucy, a violinist, into youth orchestra and music college, Gould also shadowed her sibling in forming a chamber music group: ‘I always had my older sister’s level of violin playing to aspire to. I would see what the next step was and make sure I got to experience it too. Today we are both members of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe – it’s a bit embarrassing how much I copied her, really!’

It was while playing with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe that Gould met her

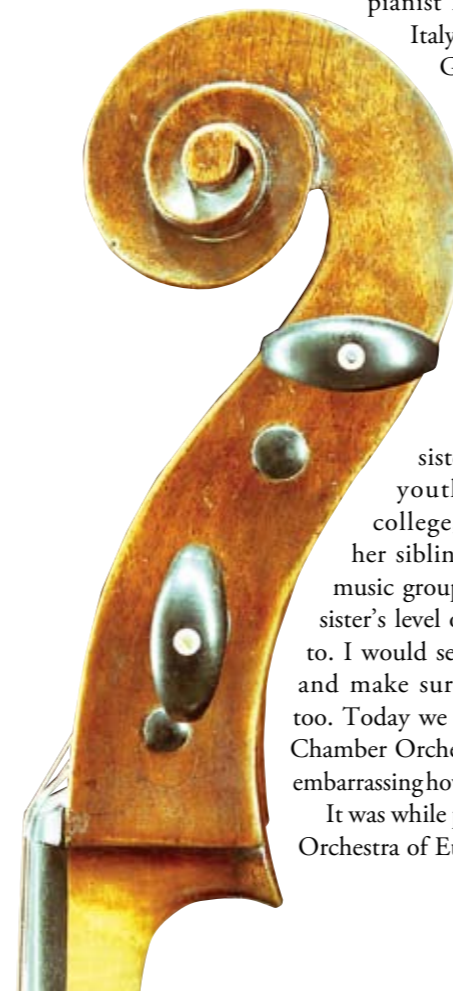
husband, cellist Richard Lester. ‘I admired the piano quartet Domus’s recordings of pieces we were learning with the Leopold Trio, so I was a fan of his. I also found him inspiring when leading the cellos in Chamber Orchestra of Europe concerts I often attended as a student. So perhaps it’s not so surprising I ended up marrying him! His musicianship continues to inspire me.’

Since last summer, Gould has been playing a 1711 Testore cello. ‘An instrument with this quality and volume of sound simply makes cello playing easier and more enjoyable, which I imagine will come across to my audience. The clarity, depth and ability to blend make it wonderful for all styles of chamber music works and the projecting quality makes it equally suitable for solo playing. One can sink into the deep sound in Romantic-era pieces, enjoy its definition in classical pieces, and benefit from the ringing tone in Bach. Perhaps some might say the rich, deep quality is most suited to later works.’

Gould has also found that her Testore forces her to take a step back: ‘To produce a singing sound I have to leave it to do some of the work and not boss it around too much, like releasing the sound rather than having to create it all myself. I feel like I have a strong companion with me who deserves my respect.’

**Lizzie Davis**

Kate Gould photos: left Eric Redmond; below right Benjamin Edouega





# Helen Kruger



AUSTRALIAN-BORN VIOLINIST HELEN KRUGER IS A FORCE TO BE reckoned with. Following studies in Australia and New Zealand she came to London's Royal Academy of Music (RAM), where she chose to specialise in period performance. She works regularly with the leading figures of the authentic performance movement including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Gabrieli Consort. She is also a concerto soloist, the founder director of Little Baroque Company, which is just about to record its first CD, directs the chamber music programme at the Junior department

'A colleague pointed to the front page of the Sotheby's catalogue and told me that that was the violin for me'

of the RAM and is a founding member of New Music Directions, providing music workshops for the homeless.

Yet Kruger is reluctant to dwell on her achievements so far. She has managed to find a way to funnel her own personal ambition into a deep respect for music, despite the fiercely competitive environment she works in. Looking back on her musical development, Kruger makes it sound as goal-directed as Beethoven's sonata form. She is particularly indebted to her parents, 'who always had me believe I could do whatever I wanted in life' and to her teacher Howard Davis: 'He opened up the whole music world for me and not only enabled me to find a place in it, but also made me want to have a place in it.'

It is precisely this combination of ability and personal drive that inspires Kruger every day. The story of how she came to hold her beautiful, prettily purpled Gagliano violin bears this out even more strongly. 'A colleague pointed to the front page of the Sotheby's catalogue and told me that that was the violin for me. I had a conversation with a friend who suggested I ring Nigel

Brown of the Stradivari Trust. The violin was in the Sotheby's auction in a matter of days so we had to move very quickly to get everything sorted.' She plays down her own role in the ensuing acquisition – 'It was just one of those unusual experiences where suddenly the whole universe conspires to help you' – but one suspects she can be highly persuasive when she wants to be. Kruger is grateful to the Trust for allowing her to concentrate on music making: 'When performing, the most important person in the room is not you, not the audience, but the composer. If you can connect with that, then any ideas you have about how you're being perceived or what you think about yourself are irrelevant.'

She is equally self-effacing when asked about her relationship with the Gagliano: 'If an instrument has been played by many people in the past 200 odd years and hopefully will be played by many more after me, I am merely one caretaker in a long line.' If she continues to blaze her 'anything is possible' trail across the music world, though, this is one caretaker who may be remembered longer than most.

**Mark Austin**





Sartori bow



'IT WAS ONLY WHEN SOMEBODY ON the train pointed to my cello case and said "What's that?" that I realised not everybody on this planet is a musician.' That particular train journey was several years ago when Guy Johnston was still a precocious teenager, but his conviction that music is universal has endured. A busy international career now takes him and his cello around the world.

Alongside a solo career that has seen him perform with leading UK and European orchestras, Johnston finds time to give regular chamber music performances, teach at London's Royal College of Music and act as patron to various charities including Future Talent and Cellos Rock! He recently ran the London marathon to help raise £20,000 for the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust in support of his brother, Rupert, who was injured in a road traffic accident in 1997. Johnston has recently released his critically acclaimed debut CD, a celebration of three generations of British composers, including a new work, *Milo*, by Mark-Anthony Turnage.

Johnston relishes the inspiration he has gained from the Sartori bow purchased for him by Nigel Brown. It used to belong to his teacher Steven Doane and this link is important to Johnston, who considers Doane a deeply formative influence. 'It encourages me to feel and listen to the sound in a new way – I love the inner quality. I like the way the weight is

distributed well from the frog through to the tip on this Sartori. It's quite an enigma to know exactly what you are searching for in a bow, and I'm sure the right choice is instinctive and different for every instrumentalist.'

Johnston has thought a lot about the complex relationship between the performer and his tools. Equally important to him, however, is the interaction with other performers, both past and present. 'I recently performed *Don Quixote* in São Paulo, which was a wonderful experience. I had never been to Brazil before and was very excited to play this great work with conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier. Pascal's father Paul was known for his memorable interpretations of this piece and it was wonderful to hear Pascal describe his memories of the collaborations he shared with his father.'

The story behind the music is ever present in Johnston's mind. 'If you're not enthused about what you are playing, there's very little chance the listener will be either.' The numerous audiences enthralled by his playing would doubtless confirm that he is passionate about the music he performs. But Johnston feels there is room for development in the other side of his performer's toolbox and he hopes he will soon find a new cello through the Stradivari Trust.

**Mark Austin**

'If you're not enthused about what you are playing, there's very little chance the listener will be either'



Guy Johnston



'I find it intriguing to think of all the music this bow has played and the changes in playing it has experienced'

# Mary Hofman

VIOLINIST MARY HOFMAN IS THRILLED WITH HER TUBBS BOW. 'A good bow not only makes performing easier but also teaches me to play better. It's a much stronger bow than the one I had before and I can create all sorts of colours and articulations that I previously felt were beyond my grasp. I always feel now as though I, and not the bow, am the limitation.'

Hofman studied at London's Guildhall School of Music, and won a scholarship for further tuition in Los Angeles. She feels most at home in the UK music scene, however, where her love affair with the violin began when she was young: 'All the people I loved best seemed to be musicians and I loved escaping to Junior Guildhall every Saturday where there were other people who understood why music was important.' She now enjoys a busy freelance career with British orchestras and as a recitalist with her duo partner Anya Fadina, with whom she recently won an award from the Elias Fawcett Trust.

She is happy to relive the story of how she came to

the attention of the Stradivari Trust: 'My teacher, Krysia Osostowicz, told Nigel about a performance of Bartók's Violin Concerto no.1 that I was giving when I was studying at Cambridge. Nigel Brown kindly came to the concert and we remained in touch. He gave me the wonderful opportunity of a couple of weeks' practice on a Guarneri and a Stradivari, which he wanted me to demonstrate in a talk he was giving. After the talk was over he asked me whether I wanted to keep the Stradivari for a few more days. I think they were the most terrifying days I've had – living in a student room with a priceless violin hidden under my bed. I hardly dared cross the courtyard to have a shower!'

But it's the Tubbs bow that animates her now, and she is keen to relate how it has changed her playing: 'The greatest difference is that it works! It feels right in my hand, almost as though my hand is a joint around it. It's well balanced and alive, and the strength brings a much richer sound from my violin – at least I hope so.' Hofman is in the midst of a successful career, and it seems almost churlish to ask

how she feels about the prospect of eventually passing the bow on to another aspiring fiddler. But she is philosophical:

'It's very powerful to know that it has been loved for a hundred years and will be loved for many thousands more.'

I find it intriguing to think of all the music this bow has played and the changes in playing it has experienced – it is lovely to be a part of its history.'

**Mark Austin**



# Florence Cooke

VIOLINIST FLORENCE COOKE THINKS SHE WAS DESTINED TO develop a love of music: 'I come from a very musical family, and our house was always full of music when I was a child. I loved the atmosphere of lots of people coming round to rehearse or read through things with my parents. My father is a conductor, and my mother a singer and teacher. I remember clearly when I was about eight realising that music was something that you could never finish, that for your whole life you could always explore it further and discover more, and that each discovery made it more amazing. It was this that first made me want to become a musician.'

While studying at Cambridge University, Cooke became the first winner of the newly inaugurated Nigel W. Brown Music Prize – an opportunity to perform a concerto with the university's top chamber orchestra. She relished the chance to perform Bartók's difficult Concerto no.2 with conductor Jonathan Del Mar, but the prize offered her a lot more than just a musical experience. 'One evening shortly after winning the competition I had a phone call from Nigel saying that he had a violin in his living room and asking if I would like to try it. I cycled over and it turned out to be the 1716 "Milstein" Stradivari, which Nigel had borrowed for a few days! It was then that he told me about the instrument scheme, and thanks to him I am now playing with this fantastic bow.'

The bow in question, by French maker Bazin, has revolutionised Cooke's playing. 'The sounds that this bow can get from the violin are amazing! In particular I like the way it produces a lot of bass harmonics, which makes the violin sound deep and rich.' She explains how she came to know that this bow was the one for her: 'The first thing I noticed was the feel of it. It has a swan head so the tip is much longer than on

most violin bows. This means that it can be strong but not too thick, which is an ideal combination and produces a wonderfully rich sound. The bow has quite a lot of natural resistance in the stick, because of the shape of the head. It is heavy enough to get a lot of volume when necessary but also very active, and excellent for playing off the string.'

Now equipped with her bow, Cooke has been busily creating opportunities to perform with it wherever possible. She has set up a chamber music festival in Sainte-Mère in Gascony, a perfect vehicle for the string quartets of her favourite composers Beethoven and Bartók, whom she feels are unsurpassed in this genre. And she regularly plays new works by living composers. One gets the impression Cooke very much wants to be able to pass on the tradition of a world filled with music to future generations – and of course she accepts the fact that one day she will have to pass on her bow too. 'I like the idea that our instruments and bows, like the music, are only on loan to us – they will last far longer than we do.'

**Mark Austin**

'The sounds that this bow can get from the violin are amazing! I like the way it produces a lot of bass harmonics, making the violin sound deep and rich'



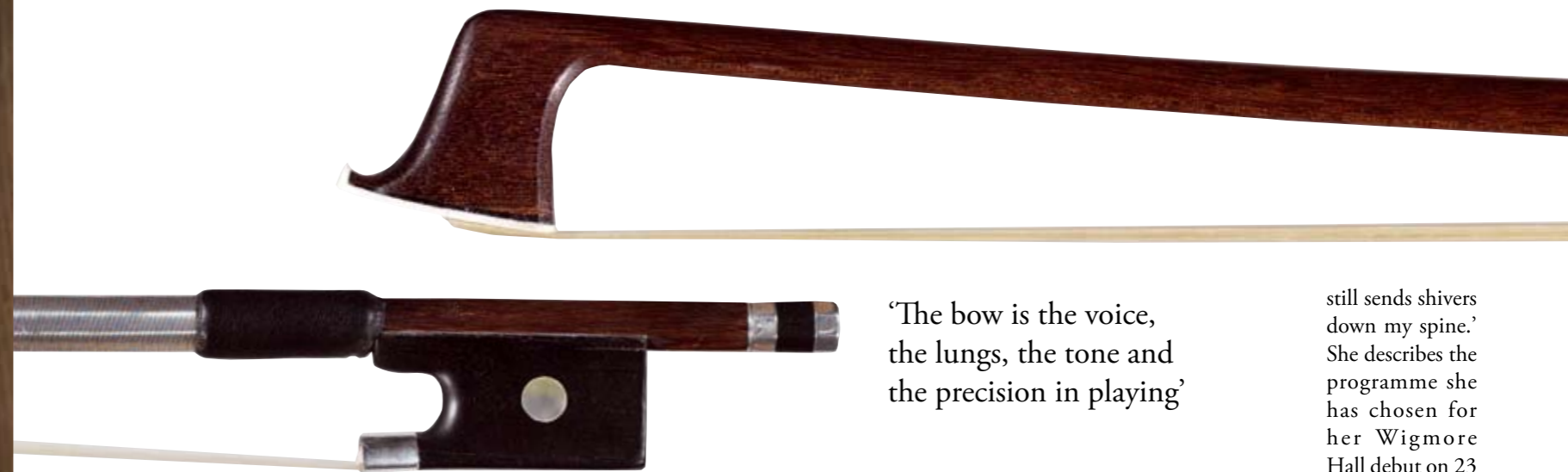
Photos: Alison Seyers







# Alda Dizdari



‘The bow is the voice, the lungs, the tone and the precision in playing’

still sends shivers down my spine.’ She describes the programme she has chosen for her Wigmore Hall debut on 23 July – Janáček, Bartók, Enescu,

ALDA DIZDARI WAS BORN INTO A MUSICAL FAMILY in Albania, but soon travelled abroad to pursue a career as a violinist. Along the way to an established solo career in the UK and Europe she studied in Bucharest, Illinois and London. The oft-quoted mantra that music is an international language suits her better than most, and indeed she is cosmopolitan in her tastes as a performer: ‘I enjoy performing anywhere as long as I have people in front of me. Big cathedrals are great spaces to play solo violin – it sounds so full and rich, and the music elevates you. Whether it’s the Wigmore Hall or the local church, music is the messenger that touches people. It doesn’t matter where that happens. The communication of a divine force is what makes performances such unique experiences and places somehow don’t matter.’ Conscious that she might be neglecting more pragmatic needs, Dizdari adds with a wry smile, ‘But of course, they are important for your CV.’

She is clearly totally immersed in her artistry and the sound world of her music. One piece that has a particular hold over her is the Sibelius Concerto: ‘I fell in love with it when I was five. It is not always easy to play though, because it takes me to a very dark place. But I love it so much – it

Pärt, Brahms – with equal passion. ‘This is a programme I have been waiting all my life to perform and I’m happy I will finally have the chance in such a prestigious and wonderful hall.’

Yet she is far from being isolated in a musical bubble. Nowhere is her ability to balance the artistic aims of a musician with the external realities of the commercial world more in evidence than in the case of the precious Dominique Peccatte bow she uses thanks to the Stradivari Trust. As Dizdari explains, it is often very difficult for private sponsors to understand why string players need a bow that sometimes costs more than a very good instrument. She wryly imitates, ‘It’s only a wooden stick with horse hair on it!’ Clearly, she has had some awkward experiences in the past. ‘You cannot make somebody outside the world of music understand that the bow is the voice, the lungs, the tone and the precision in playing. I found that understanding in a simple telephone conversation with Nigel Brown. I had never met him before but he understood me so well.’

Dizdari says that it is extremely important to try as many bows as possible before deciding on one. ‘Once you’ve tried everything, your hands start to select, and there is no more confusion. There are a lot of very good bows, but very few exceptional ones. There are a lot of bows that play very well, but very few that fit your own style and temperament. In order to find the one, you have to kiss all the frogs along the way.’ Dizdari’s pun was probably unintentional, but hopefully she will be content to play with this Peccatte – and its frog – for a long time to come.

**Mark Austin**



## ENDELLION QUARTET

Recording sponsored by the Stradivari Trust

THE PLAYERS OF THE ENDELLION QUARTET are some of the most experienced musicians to have benefited from a relationship with the Stradivari Trust. Andrew Watkinson, Ralph de Souza, Garfield Jackson and David Waterman have had a long association with Nigel Brown. They were delighted that the Trust was able to sponsor their ground-breaking recording of Beethoven's complete quartets and quintets for Warner Classics, which includes previously unrecorded fragments alongside critically acclaimed performances of the known works.

Watkinson, the group's leader, says that they most enjoy 'composers whose music has a satisfying balance between the head and the heart', and the music of Beethoven clearly embodies much of the philosophy behind all the quartet's performances. The list of musicians Watkinson admires – Menuhin, Véggh, Brainin, Furtwängler, Argerich and Busch – includes interpreters renowned for their ability to blend an intellectual and emotional grasp of the music with special intensity.

Now in its 31st year, the group has gone from strength to strength. The quartet has a worldwide schedule; this year it will play in Mexico for the first time, return to India, and continue a busy season in the UK.

Watkinson refuses to align the ensemble with the modern world's increasingly powerful demand that music should speak only to the emotions. But it would be impossible to describe these four players as serious. Watkinson lets slip that the four players

usually enjoy a couple of hands of bridge before each concert and, perhaps more surprisingly, in the interval as well. Those harbouring romantic notions of the artists engaging in profound pre-performance meditation may be disappointed. Yet there are parallels between bridge's complex system of communication between partners and the requirements of musical relationships within a quartet. Perhaps their interval habit is not so surprising after all.

Watkinson is equally unabashed when discussing the status of instruments as highly valued objects. 'I think we treat them with great care but

you have to accept that there will always be some risk of causing them damage and pray that it doesn't happen to you. Thank goodness there are wonderful restorers like the late lamented Dietrich Kessler who can repair almost anything. He repaired at least two violins that

had been driven over so well that nobody could see the damage!'

His healthy attitude to risk surely has a lot to say to today's safety-first society. And of course the influence of Beethoven is there too. The late quartets require the players to throw caution to the wind – and the Endellion Quartet's performances are all the more exciting and life-enhancing for it.

**Mark Austin**

The players usually enjoy a couple of hands of bridge before each concert and, perhaps more surprisingly, in the interval as well



Photo Chris Frazer Smith

# Endellion Quartet



Photo Eric Richmond

from left to right:  
David Waterman,  
Ralph de Souza,  
Garfield Jackson and  
Andrew Watkinson



## ATRIUM QUARTET

Currently seeking instruments

'It's no secret that fine, beautiful instruments are half of the success of any musician.' Anton Ilyunin, second violinist of the Atrium Quartet, describes the group's ongoing search for the instruments that will help them realise their musical vision. He goes into intimate detail on the particular need for instruments of an equally high quality in a string quartet: 'Historically the two violins always live together, and we can say the same about the cello and viola. Nevertheless, depending on the score, the violins can imitate the viola sound, or the other way round – sometimes the viola or cello needs to play like the first violin. That's why it is so important to have the best instruments with the fullest range of possible sounds.' The quartet players

'We should always feel we have direct contact with the audience and the capacity for emotional exchange'

are delighted to have been taken under the wing of the Stradivari Trust, and are currently searching the world for the right instruments to satisfy their musical needs.

Not that Ilyunin and his colleagues – violinist Alexey Naumenko, violist Dmitry Pitulko and cellist Anna Gorelova – haven't already made a big impact. The quartet is happy to cover any terrain, with tours in Europe, Japan and America approaching and a new recording of music by the Spanish composer Jordi Cervello to be released shortly. Ilyunin says the group welcomes the chance to reach out to their listeners: 'We love performing in big concert halls, on big stages. It gives so many possibilities in the range of dynamics, nuances and technique. But another important thing for us is the audience.

We should always feel we have direct contact with it and the capacity for emotional exchange.'

Ilyunin gives a fascinating glimpse into the often strange relationship between performer and an apparently discerning audience when he recounts one of the quartet's clearest memories: 'A couple of years ago we performed one of Tchaikovsky's quartets – no.2 – in the second half of a concert in southern Europe. Everybody was happy in the concert hall; we had a very warm reception and received many compliments. It was only much later that evening that one of us noticed that Tchaikovsky's Quartet no.3 had been advertised on the huge poster in front of the building. None of the organisers or audience members noticed it! Since then, we have always checked the concert listing before entering the concert hall.'

Despite his awareness that artists must take their relationship with the public seriously, one suspects the humour of this incident didn't pass the quartet members by. Ilyunin also recounts a light-hearted group philosophy, 'Just enjoy the moment!' The group seems happy to focus primarily on what they can achieve now but it's clear they yearn for instruments to match their driving ambition. 'We had an incredible experience in Washington's Library of Congress when we were given the opportunity to perform on three Stradivari instruments and Kreisler's Guarneri. That was the greatest hour of our lives.'

**Mark Austin**

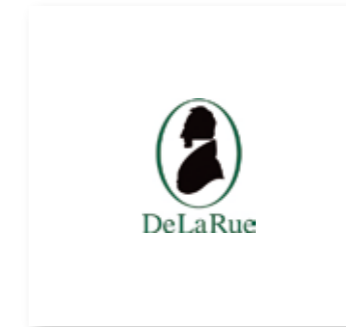


from left to right: Anton Ilyunin, Anna Gorelova, Dmitry Pitulko and Alexey Naumenko

# Atrium Quartet



THE STRADIVARI TRUST would like to thank the following people and organisations for their support with this publication, and the special commemorative concert in the West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge, on 14 June 2010



We would also like to thank Emily Smith (Instrument Schemes Manager), photographer Chris Frazer Smith, Dan Hill (Serene Studios), Lord and Lady Eatwell and Nigel Brown.

Text and images compiled by Mark Austin and Lizzie Davis.

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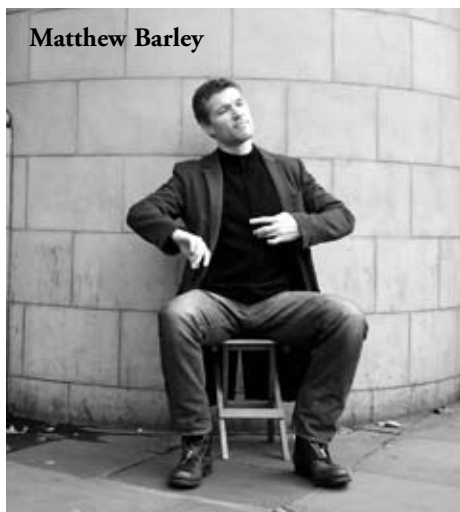
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Krysia Osostowicz



Lorraine McAslan



Matthew Barley



Endellion Quartet

Photos Chris Fraser-Smith





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