

Sfz >

A force for young string players

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WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE? six suggestions
for a fantastic career after college

GIG BAG ROUND-UP the convenient
way to travel with strings

Claudio Bohórquez

South America's super-cool cellist meditates on his rise to stardom

supplement to
April 2006 issue

theStrad



If you're into meditation and music, then you'll love this issue's cover star – Claudio Bohórquez, who has thought much

about the connection between them.

The South American cellist defines himself as a Buddhist and has a laid-back approach that's refreshing in today's frenetic musical world. It also seems to have helped him to cope with his busy schedule, no bad thing. Meanwhile fellow cellist Denise Djokic found a different way to create space for herself and took a month out of her schedule to learn Prokofiev's Symphony-Concerto, as she describes on our back page – a great idea if you can afford the time.

Elsewhere we're in the thick of things, with a feature on today's young stars who have plugged in their instruments to forge a music career. With rock, hip-hop and jazz all featured, they're really taking electric strings in a dynamic new direction. And while we're on the subject of careers, don't miss our feature on page 12, which shows just how many options there are out there for bright young music graduates.

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SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW YOUR STUFF...

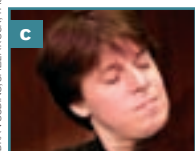
How much do you know about your instrument and the people who play it? Test your string knowledge with our quiz

1 There's rosin dust caked under the strings of your instrument.

What's the best way to get rid of it?

- a) white spirit on a soft cloth
- b) don't do it yourself – take it to a professional
- c) chip it off gently with a palette knife
- d) don't let it build up in the first place, always wipe gently before putting instrument away

2 Can you match the famous faces to the hands?



3 The highest price ever paid for a violin at auction is:

- a) \$4,000,550
- b) \$950,300
- c) \$2,032,000
- d) \$1,704,000

4 How do you tell a Stradivari from a Guarneri 'del Gesù'?

- a) the scroll
- b) the f-holes
- c) the arching

5 Which violinist below gave the premiere of which violin concerto?

- 1) Brahms
- 2) Beethoven
- 3) Tchaikovsky
- 4) Sibelius
- 5) Elgar

- a) Viktor Nováček
- b) Franz Clement
- c) Adolf Brodsky
- d) Fritz Kreisler
- e) Joseph Joachim

6 How many works did Beethoven compose for string quartet?

- a) 15
- b) 19
- c) 17

7 What was the name of the medieval 'ancestor' to the violin?

- a) viola da braccio
- b) vielle
- c) rebec

8 On what part of your instrument or bow would you find a 'ferrule'?

- a) frog
- b) tailpiece
- c) pegbox

9 How many performances on average does Nikolaj Znaider play each year?

- a) 60
- b) 150
- c) 90

10 How often should you have your bow rehaired?

- a) every month or two
- b) twice a year
- c) every two years

HOW DID YOU DO? Give yourself a point for every correct answer

[11–18] Well done! You know all about your instrument. But maybe you should get out more

[5–10] Pretty darned clever, and not too nerdy

[0–4] Hmm, hope you can actually play your instrument – you don't seem to know much about it

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 10 depends on use, but for a professional player [a]
- 9 [c]
- 8 [a] – it's the metal band that clamps the hair as it passes out from the frog
- 7 could be any of them, musicologists simply can't agree!
- 6 [b]
- 5 [a] [2a] [3c] [4a] [5d]
- 4 all three are correct
- 3 [c], for the 'Lady Tremain' Strad, at Christie's New York, April 2005
- 2 [a] [b] [c] [d] [e]
- 1 [d], but if it needs more help, definitely [b]

TANKSTREAM TO BECOME AUSTRALIA'S OFFICIAL STRING QUARTET

All-female quartet steps into shoes of disgruntled ASQ members. **Amanda Holloway** reports



COURTESY KATE HARLEY

THE AWARD-WINNING YOUNG

Tankstream Quartet has been named as Australia's national chamber ensemble. From 2007 it will take on the title the Australian String Quartet (ASQ).

The Tankstream players, Rowell and Anne Horton, violins, Sally Boud, viola, and Rachel Johnston, cello, will be the ninth incarnation of the ASQ, which was founded in 1985 and is still Australia's only full-time nationally touring string quartet.

The former members of the ASQ resigned last year, after complaints about the gruelling schedule. Violinists Natsuko Yoshimoto and James Cuddeford and violist Jeremy Williams also criticised the 'management's continued reluctance to implement the clear artistic direction shown by us'.

But manager Stephen Block says it's an economic necessity to tour the cities and rural areas of Australia. 'Without the tours

we couldn't sustain the ASQ as a business. And the ASQ looks after its players - they stay in five-star hotels nearly everywhere, and there are always gaps between tours for rest and relaxation.'

Tankstream leader, violinist Sophie Rowell, describes it as 'a fabulous opportunity. This is like a dream come true for us, to be a full-time string quartet and to make a living out of it.' She said they'd reached the stage of wondering how they were going

to continue, 'and then out of the blue this came up. It's made things a whole lot easier!'

The Tankstream players, who won first prize in the Eighth International String Quartet Competition in Cremona and second prize in the Premio Paolo Borciano Competition in June, are currently based in Cologne, where they are being mentored by the Alban Berg Quartet at the Hochschule für Musik. Two recordings on ABC Classics are due to be released this year.

NEW USE FOR BAD VIOLINISTS?

POLICE FORCES AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMPANIES ALL

over England are adopting a new deterrent for teenage gangs - a black box which sounds like a badly played violin. Adult ears can barely detect the high-pitched noise emitted by the Sonic Teenager Deterrent, but youths find it so painful that they have to leave the area immediately. Shop owners can control the signal strength as the problem of loitering youth ebbs and flows.

With so many musicians out of work, however, why not employ a soloist or a whole string section to play badly?

LIVING THE FANTASY



BENJAMIN ALVAREZ

ASPIRING SOLOISTS ARE

always longing for a major new concerto to show off their talents. Mats Lidström is producing just the thing for cellists with attitude. Inspired by Sarasate's 'Carmen' Fantasy for violin, Lidström is writing a 30-minute Fantasy for cello and orchestra, based on Verdi's *Rigoletto*. He's dedicating it to his cello students at the Royal Academy of Music.

Lidström has happy memories of playing in the opera as principal cellist in Stockholm's Royal Opera Orchestra. At first he hesitated to tinker with a masterpiece. 'Then I thought of the countless others writing paraphrases on Donizetti, Weber or Bellini,' he said. Lidström hasn't modified Verdi's tonal language. 'The only major changes, besides my introduction, are that I've made one of the arias into a cello sextet and incorporated Liszt's *Rigoletto* paraphrase!'

He's not sure how many of his students will be rushing to play it. 'My wife asked me at an early stage not to make the cello part too difficult. But I'm not one to take the easy option!' Now Lidström has to finish composing the music and learn it himself, in time for the premiere in Sweden on 27 April.

YOUTH ORCHESTRA LOOKS FOR CASH INJECTION

THE FUTURE OF THE POPULAR

Ulster Youth Orchestra (UYO) is in jeopardy, after the discovery of a major funding crisis.

The 13-year-old group has run out of money, leaving thousands of young musicians wondering if their tuition and concert prospects have vanished for ever. The cross-community orchestra was founded to provide opportunities for Northern Ireland's young musicians. A former vice-chancellor of

Queen's University, Sir George Bain, has been called in to restructure the organisation. Orchestra chairman Tim Kerr said he was optimistic that the UYO could emerge from its financial crisis and continue with its invaluable work.

DRAMA STRUCK ANOTHER young orchestra when its coach burst into flames on a journey back from a concert. Happily the 41 players of the Louisville Youth Orchestra escaped unhurt.



MAGEN/BOGERS

Need ideas for publicity shots? A bike's the thing for Hyperion cellist Alban Gerhardt, bent on selling his new Shostakovich CD

LATEST STRING PRODUCTS



You can't adjust the tilt of the stylish Everest shoulder rest – it's designed to be used at an ergonomically correct angle – which also means there are no brackets or foot pivots to break. Manufactured from high-grade ABS plastic, it has an extra-thick neoprene foam pad for increased comfort. Available in 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 and full-size versions, the Everest shoulder rest is \$14.99. For information, see www.olivermusic.com.

The latest violin pick-up from Shadow Electronics allows you to 'mike up' without making any alterations to your instrument. The device which, it's claimed, gives an absolutely natural sound with zero hum, mounts under the bridge and clips on to the side of the violin like a chin rest. The pick-up has a standard 1/4" jack audio output. The Shadow SH 945 NFX-V Violin Pick-up is £109. Information at www.jhs.co.uk.

WHAT'S

HOT NOT

IN THE STRING WORLD

[HOT]

This Isn't For You: a new London club selling modern music to the next generation. Hear Alina Ibragimova or Natalie Clein in Shoreditch; an hour-long set, then dance the night away.

Shaping up! The Association of British Orchestras has launched the Healthy Orchestra Charter, and Bournemouth Symphony players are having free Pilates classes. Taking care of yourself – it's so now.

Congrats to Nigel Kennedy – still the best-selling classical virtuoso at 50. Now he's gone back to his real name, we're so glad we can call him Nige again!

Beer to fund student scholarships? St Peter's Brewery is sponsoring the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's student outreach programme. Cheers!

Online music at your fingertips – we love having a whole week to catch BBC radio programmes on the web.



KARL SCHENCK/REX FEATURES

[NOT]

Shovelfuls of Shostakovich. Masses of Mozart. Aren't we all bored by anniversaries of composers' births, deaths and first communions?

Antiqued violins. What's the point? If it's new, it's new. Let's not pretend it isn't.

Jokes about G-strings – so tacky!



WWW.FLEAVES.COM

Broken promises: The UK government has cut money for music services by £4m to £26m and is now giving it directly to schools. Does that mean goodbye cellos, hello computers?

MELLOW CELLO



For a sought-after international soloist, South American cellist Claudio Bohórquez seems delightfully laid-back in his approach. Shirley Apthorp joins him in a Berlin café to talk about music, and meditation



Audio Bohórquez has a lot on his plate. His solo schedule keeps him on the road in Europe, Asia and America, and he's about to head off to the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival. As if that isn't enough, he's involved with education projects, he has an ensemble that plays entirely improvised music, and he likes to work with visual artists on new multimedia installations.

It's a wonder that he has any time at all to spend at home in Berlin's hip Prenzlauer Berg, let alone time for lunch. But somehow, Bohórquez gives the impression that he has all the time in the world. In person, he cuts a less intimidating figure than his glamorous publicity photos. He is a strikingly handsome man, but the mane of chestnut hair is pulled back into a pony tail and hidden under a red woollen cap, protection against Berlin's February sleet. Bohórquez pulls that hat further down and leads me through the icy streets to his favourite local vegan restaurant.

We settle on one of the wooden benches, in a room that radiates steaming soup and kindness. Bohórquez could talk about his new CD of Debussy, Prokofiev and Britten cello sonatas just out on the Berlin Classics label. He could talk about working with Daniel Barenboim or Christoph Eschenbach, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Boston Symphony or the Tokyo Philharmonic. His list of recordings and engagements is as prestigious as any soloist could wish. But first, he wants to talk about meditation and Buddhist philosophy.

'In my heart, I define myself as a Buddhist,' he says. 'I've been around the ideas for a long time, and in many ways it makes a lot of sense. But I haven't taken any vows yet. In a way Buddhism has brought me back to Christianity, too.'


Bohórquez lacks the vehemence of the fanatic, imparting his ideas mildly. Somehow it fits with his playing, which is pliant and sensitive, and tends to unfold with the organic naturalness of speech. There's something undogmatic and understanding about both the man and his music. He agrees that there are many similarities between meditation and music making. 'The kind of meditation that I practise is very simple, Tibetan Buddhist, just focusing on your breath.'

'When you improvise, you can do the same, also starting with your breath.'

That's the first thing. Without breath, no music. You need to inhale to actually be able to start making music. It is essential not only for being alive, but also for being a musician. It sounds simple, but it's terribly important. Many musicians are not even aware of their breath. But it's wonderful when you do discover it, especially as an instrumentalist.'

In fact, it was the human voice that first lured Bohórquez into the world of music. Born in Gifhorn, Germany, to Peruvian and Uruguayan parents, he was the oldest of three children but the last to take up a musical instrument. Though his mother is a pianist and his father a bassoonist, Bohórquez initially displayed no interest in their profession.

'My mother tried to teach me the piano, but I really didn't want to learn. Then she started taking me to rehearsals at the opera house where she was working, instead of getting a babysitter. I was the only child there, and the whole opera house was my playground – I could go anywhere I wanted.'



You need to inhale to actually be able to start making music. It is essential not only for being alive, but also for being a musician

'They were rehearsing Mozart operas – *Die Zauberflöte*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Don Giovanni* and so on. I would listen to the music again and again, and then go home and listen to the records, reading the text in the booklet. It was fantastic.' At around the same time, his best friend took up the cello. 'Suddenly I wanted to play the cello, too. My parents were quite surprised. Eventually they said, "OK, we will give you an instrument, but only on condition that you practise every day."

'Of course, I immediately agreed. But a day came when the sun was shining and my friends were playing soccer, and I thought, I don't want to practise! I told my parents, "I really want to play soccer now." And they said, "Sure, you can, but then we'll take your cello away." I was so angry! I said, "OK, you can have the cello back." And then I went to my room – I remember it really clearly – and within five minutes I had this strange feeling.

They were taking my cello away. And then I knew that I just could not stop. I realised that I could put everything into this instrument that I felt, everything I wanted to put into words but couldn't.'

A few years later, the eleven-year-old Bohórquez found himself a finalist in Germany's Jugend Musiziert competition. 'For the first time it struck me that it was all working. I was sent to other competitions, and it became a kind of chain reaction.' Bohórquez went on to take prizes at the Czech Radio's Concertino Praga, the Youth Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and the International Rostropovich competition in Paris. His 1995 victory at the Geneva International Music Competition was a breakthrough. 'I was immediately sent to Tokyo to play with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, which was great, because it opened Asia, where I hadn't been before. Then there were a lot of concerts here in Germany, and I had the chance to play for several conductors.'

Like many successful soloists, Bohórquez views competitions with a healthy dose of pragmatism. It was his competition victories that brought him into contact with his teachers, David Geringas and Boris Pergamenschikow. The latter was to remain his main teacher until his untimely death in 2002. 'I am eternally grateful to Boris for his wise, humorous and all-encompassing, kind way of teaching,' says Bohórquez with feeling.

Competitions taught him the discipline of learning repertory and performing to a high level within a short space of time. 'Of course every jury member has their own opinion, and the person they find the most convincing might not necessarily be the best. Everybody has different taste. Still, of course, it's a good feeling when you win.'

In 2000, Bohórquez was to make his debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Christoph Eschenbach. Two weeks before the concert, the first ►

FACT BOX

- 1976 > Born in Germany to Peruvian and Uruguayan parents
- 1990 > Begins studies with David Geringas in Lübeck
- 1993 > Begins ten years of study with Boris Pergamenschikow in Cologne & Berlin
- 1995 > Wins first prize at Geneva International Music Competition
- 2000 > Asian debut with the Tokyo Symphony
- 2000 > Wins first prize and special prize at the International Casals Competition held by the Kronberg Academy in Germany
- 2000 > US debut with the Chicago Symphony playing Shostakovich's First Concerto under Christoph Eschenbach at Ravinia
- 2001 > NDR Symphony Orchestra Hamburg debut playing Penderecki
- 2001 > NHK Symphony debut playing in NHK Hall and Suntory Hall
- 2002 > Becomes a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist
- 2002 > Boston Symphony Orchestra debut under Neville Marriner at Tanglewood
- 2003 > UK debut with a Wigmore Hall recital
- 2003 > Becomes guest professor at Berlin's Hochschule für Musik 'Hanns Eisler'
- 2003 > Los Angeles Philharmonic debut under Andreas Delfs at the Hollywood Bowl
- 2003 > Philadelphia Orchestra debut playing Shostakovich under Christoph Eschenbach
- 2004 > Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra debut playing Dvořák under Thomas Dausgaard
- 2004 > First CD, of Strauss's *Don Quixote* with the Dresden Philharmonic and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos (Edel Classics 0017682BC)
- 2005 > CD of Tchaikovsky Piano Trio with Lars Vogt and Antje Weithaas, a tribute to cellist Boris Pergamenschikow (EMI 5 58062 2)
- 2005 > Doha release a benefit CD for the Stupa of the Shambhala Mountain Center in Colorado
- 2006 > First recital CD of Debussy, Britten and Prokofiev sonatas (Edel Classics 0017832BC)

More information at
www.claudiobohórquez.com



J. HENRYFAR

If you use gut strings and an orchestra uses steel, it's like driving a VW Golf in a Formula One race

« International Casals Competition in Germany was to be held. Bohórquez was wary of damping his Chicago debut with a mediocre competition result, but Pergamenschikow urged him to enter. He did, and he won. The prize included two years' playing Casals's Gofriller cello. 'The first month I couldn't practise. I was just listening to the instrument, looking for traces of Pablo Casals. But after a month I became more relaxed about it.

'I read a lot about Casals, and one thing I kept coming back to was the passage where he said that he was not looking for a cello that was nice and perfect, like a Stradivarius. He wanted to have an instrument that you had to work on. And then I understood what he meant. Because the Gofriller is not so easy to play. Each string is completely different. The A string is a bit on the edgy side, but brilliant, and then the D string is completely smooth and soft, and then you have the G and C, so if you want to produce an even

sound from the A down to the C string, you have to work constantly.

'Actually the instrument taught me a lot about my bow technique, about vibrato and how to use it. And afterwards I returned to the very beautiful instrument that I'm lucky to be able to play, a 1687 Giovanni Battista Rogeri, which the L-Bank in Baden-Württemberg has given me for an unlimited time. It is the complete opposite – easy to play, very healthy. But playing Casals's cello taught me to look for specific sounds and colours in this cello.'

Bohórquez uses a Torte and a Lamy bow alternately, and strings his cello with a mixture of Larsen and Thomastik strings.

'I almost opted for gut strings. I had some wonderful masterclasses with Anner Bylsma, who opened my ears and eyes for how you can actually talk with the cello, not only sing. Every bow can be a syllable, and you can really use the right hand to articulate. It was a key experience for me. And I had some masterclasses with

Steven Isserlis, who also uses gut strings, so I was really tempted to go for it.

'But then making yourself heard above an orchestra that is using steel strings is difficult. If you use gut strings, it's a bit like driving a VW Golf in a Formula One race against a Ferrari. Not in terms of quality, of course. It's just a physical thing.' Bohórquez remains interested in the period instrument movement, but not inflexibly so. His repertory interests embrace everything from Bach to Penderecki, Rihm and composers of his own generation. And he takes his inspiration wherever he finds it.

'I've been fortunate enough to work with some really amazing personalities. Daniel Barenboim doesn't work so often with cellists, so it was a big thing for me to play Schumann with him in Chicago. I played for him in Berlin four or five times before the concert. It was astonishing. He is very direct, and tells you bluntly what he likes and doesn't like. He said that I should really feel the physical effort ►



WIN BOHÓRQUEZ'S CD

We have ten copies of Claudio Bohórquez's CD of Debussy, Prokofiev and Britten cello sonatas to give away. For a chance to win one, send an email or postcard marked 'Claudio Bohórquez', with your name, address and telephone number, to thestrad@orpheuspublications.com or to the address shown on p.1. The first ten entries out of the hat will each receive a CD.

Closing date: 31 May 2006

◀ that it takes to play an interval that rises a fourth or a fifth. Barenboim put his ash tray on the floor, and said, "Imagine that this is the lowest point. If I put it up here, it takes so much effort. If I put it even higher, it takes that much more effort." It was simple, but it was a revelation for me. A singer feels the physical effort of an interval, but as an instrumentalist you need to be able to feel it, too.

'Performing with him was one of the most beautiful experiences I've ever had. He gives you space, but within that space you have to manage. And he gives space to the orchestra, too. He's very generous, but at the same time he knows exactly what he's doing. But he has an incredible sense of balance.'

Another major source of inspiration for Bohórquez is his improvisational work

with his ensemble, Doha. Fellow trio members Hayden Kent Chisholm, a composer and jazz musician, and Gareth Lubbe, a classically trained violist, share his interest in meditation, and the proceeds of their first CD support the Great Stupa at the Shambhala Mountain Center in Colorado, a retreat where meditation and contemplative disciplines are taught to thousands of visitors each year. 'What we do with Doha is free improvisation. It's not jazz, it's not Baroque or contemporary, it's just what comes out,' he says. 'At first I was reluctant to try improvisation, but once you jump off the cliff of feeling insecure, you discover this ocean that is just endless. For a classical musician it's just wonderful, because the responsibility of being an advocate for a composer is gone, and it's just interpretation of the present moment.'

In October, Doha will collaborate with artist Rebecca Horn to compose music for an exhibition at Berlin's Martin-Gropius-Bau. Bohórquez has also worked with German painter Klaus-Peter Kirchner on a performance/art presentation *Room for Pablo Casals*, featuring 14 pillars of light, texts by Casals, and the Bach suites for solo cello. The installation toured to London, Hamburg and Basel.

By the time Bohórquez gets on to his involvement in contemporary art, we have moved down the road to a slick café for coffee and decidedly non-vegan sticky cake. He discusses it with the same open enthusiasm that he accords all of his diverse interests. All too soon it's time to return to the sleet and the mundanities of urban traffic. But our encounter leaves a warmth that takes the edge off the chill. With the single-minded pursuit of his own musical and spiritual truths, Bohórquez seems a very long way from the mundane. ■



Claudio Bohórquez plays to Berlin primary school children as part of Rhapsody in School, a programme organised by pianist Lars Vogt. 'It's an amazing opportunity to sharpen their senses to experience music,' he says



You've graduated with honours, and your parents are bursting with pride. But you know you're not going to make it as an international soloist. What else is there?

Plenty of fantastic opportunities, as Hazel Davis discovers

When the party'

So, you've studied for three years solid, practised your scales like nobody's business and focused all your attentions on becoming the next Lara St John. But the record deal never materialises and you find yourself looking for an alternative means of earning a living. You should forget about being a star and get a compromise job, right? Wrong.

Mark Messenger, head of strings at the Royal College of Music, says: 'This is an attitude that is held now only by a very few "old-school" teachers, who believe in a basic hierarchy of values for various activities. In this hierarchy, being a soloist comes at the top and then we go down through orchestral playing (contract job=good, freelance=not so good) to teaching, and then (horror of horrors) jobs that don't necessarily focus on just playing (education work, music therapy and so on).'

Many music students still crave that elusive solo career as if it's the be-all and end-all and all other avenues are back-up plans. Messenger advises, 'Awareness

and aptitude within a wide range of areas should not be seen as back-up plans but essential development, not only for earning a living but also in terms of developing the self and the musician.'

The best musicians are those who have a broad range of interests and skills that informs all their activities. Moreover, most of the more successful soloists also combine their playing with other activities such as teaching or ensemble work.

One only has to look at Paul Watkins, who, in a superb display of multi-tasking, combines critically acclaimed cello playing with being an internationally renowned conductor and a member of the Nash Ensemble. Says Messenger, 'Good soloists are almost inevitably good chamber players, communicators, teachers and are aware of a range of physical and psychological issues as well.'

Cellist Sara Lovell is an excellent example: she is a well-respected soloist and teacher with an elite teaching practice that concentrates on the use of accelerated learning techniques. She gives talks, workshops and

masterclasses on the subject of accelerated learning and has just finished a publication for children and their parents provisionally entitled *Cellotude*. Lovell has also released the Bach cello suites on her own label.

These days for a music graduate it's much more common to aim for a portfolio CV, one that demonstrates your versatility within the music industry and the fact that you have left the confines of your study and seen daylight in the last year. Considering the fact that only a small percentage of graduates make it as professional soloists and a very small percentage of those actually make a decent living, it is vital to ensure that you have explored the myriad options available to you as a music graduate.

Because being a soloist is still held in such high regard, few graduates stop to think about whether they actually have the right personality to make a success of it. Other jobs have generally accepted guidelines as to whom they suit and whom they don't, yet solo performance seems to be an elusive goal open to anyone who can whizz



ROBERT JUDGES/ARND BRONKHORST

through a Paganini caprice. It's not as simple as that, says Andrea Spain, professional skills programme leader at Trinity College of Music: 'With so much competition, being brilliant does not ensure success as a soloist. Luck, self-promotion, fashion and being in the right place at the right time can all be just as important.'

Andrea Spain continues: 'Hundreds of talented string players enter conservatories and universities in the UK each year. With international competition, few if any will make a living as soloists. However, employment prospects for musicians have never been better. There is unprecedented demand for passionate, enthusiastic musicians with vision and leadership skills in smaller ensembles, creative projects, outreach, education and community programmes.'

So it's time to take stock and consider which of the varied careers available might suit you and, more importantly, which would lead to a fulfilling life in music. Here are six string players who have made their mark in very different fields. ■



SESSION MUSICIAN

Joanne Buckland

age 24

freelance violinist and session musician

Where and what did you study?

BMus RWCMD (violin), Postgraduate Diploma in Music Performance RWCMD (violin)

How did you get into your chosen field?

Always wanted to do it, so decided to take the plunge. Moved to London in July to really give it a go.

How competitive is it?

Incredibly competitive! I was established in South Wales and had to leave all of that to move to London and start all over again, with more competition.

What sort of person does it suit?

Self-disciplined, strong-willed, very proactive, sociable, slightly competitive, ambitious...

What are the perks of the job?

The variety of work, meeting different people, being able (sometimes) to pick and choose what you want to do, the uncertainty, sometimes the money!

And the downsides?

Also the uncertainty! The lack of routine, the fact you need so much self-discipline, the networking (can be quite difficult), the irregular income.

What's the best piece of advice you can give?

Persevere. It won't happen overnight. It isn't easy but if it's what you really want to do it's worth sticking at. You have to be strong to cope with knockbacks.



ORCHESTRAL MUSICIAN

Tom Beer

age 28

viola player with the Hallé

Where and what did you study?

Trinity College of Music (BMus), Oberlin Conservatory, artist diploma

How did you get into your chosen field?

When I came back to England after my postgraduate training, I started auditioning for pretty much everything. After a fair few job offers and freelancing around for two years I was invited into the Hallé as an extra player. I auditioned soon after for the number three job.

How competitive is it?

It's an incredibly competitive career. Just think of the hordes of musicians leaving college every year, joining ranks of others from last year and the years before that.

What sort of person does it suit?

As a string player you've got to be happy being part of a big team. You need to be sociable, tolerant, good company. But even a cursory glance around any orchestra would tell you that it's full of a wide range of characters, like any other job.

What are the perks of the job?

The quality of life that having more of a routine gives you. And there's the security of a salary, of course.

And the downsides?

I've only just started, though I imagine the routine can go from comforting to boring.

What's the best piece of advice you can give?

To practise hard and not to give up. You're bound to have some failures, but if you really want to succeed, you will. ➤



◀ **FESTIVAL ORGANISER**

Alison Povey

30s

manager and acting CEO of Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (HCMF)

Where and what did you study?

BA Musicology, Huddersfield University (violin and piano)

How did you get into your chosen field?

I completed a module in concert management for my degree and realised that there was far more to music than performing! I was a volunteer steward for hcmf for the three years I was a student.

What sort of person does it suit?

You have to be organised, methodical, tidy and able to multi-task. You have to have the ability to be creative with a small budget, make links with partner organisations and be willing to put in the hours when needed.

What are the perks?

Sounds corny, but there's nothing more rewarding than communicating with an artist/composer for a year, sorting out all their travel, rehearsal schedule and so on, and then meeting them on the day.

And the downsides?

The long hours at times and the never-ending problem solving (although there's nothing more satisfying than solving a problem with minutes to go!)

What's the best piece of advice you can give?

Get as much voluntary experience as possible. Although the arts admin courses are excellent, I have learnt far more on the job than in a classroom.

You have to be prepared to do some unpaid work to begin with, if necessary, to build up experience
Laura Smith



ARTIST MANAGER

Laura Smith

age 26

assistant artist manager at HarrisonParrott

Where and what did you study?

BA in Music, University of Oxford (violin performance)

How did you get into your chosen field?

I worked for two years at the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building in Oxford as assistant manager, and then applied for the job at HarrisonParrott.

How competitive is it?

It's a difficult field to get into as there are not many jobs but, like anything, it's much easier once you've got a foot in the door. You have to be prepared to do some unpaid work to begin with, if necessary, to build up experience.

What sort of person does it suit?

Somebody who is organised, level-headed and able to cope with being moaned at.

What are the perks?

If you're lucky enough to be looking after friendly artists, it's great to be able to build up a rapport with them.

And the downsides?

There's some pretty mundane paperwork involved. And sometimes, if an artist is cheeky or seems to show a lack of respect for you, this can be quite disheartening.

What's the best piece of advice you can give?

Start looking for experience, for example helping out at a music festival during the summer and then write to as many agencies as you can.

I did a module in concert management for my degree and realised there was more to music than performing
Alison Povey



MUSIC THERAPIST

Oonagh Jones

age 31

Greenwich Teaching Primary Care Trust and the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre

What and where did you study?

University of Bristol BA (Hons) in music, postgraduate certificate in performance (viola) at Trinity College of Music, London. Masters in Music Therapy, Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre, City University.

How did you get into your chosen field?

I worked freelance as a viola player and teacher and was involved in music making projects with people with disabilities.

How competitive is it?

The approved postgraduate courses can be competitive to get on. There is some NHS work, but in pockets. There's a chance to set up your own work once you qualify.

What sort of person does it suit?

A flexible musician with relevant life/work experience. Music therapists work predominantly through improvisation so you need to be open to developing your improvising skills. You must develop insight into yourself and your relationships with others.

What are the perks?

You experience how powerful music can be as a tool to enable change in clients. It can be a very satisfying job.

And the downsides?

It can be a very demanding job physically and emotionally. It can become isolated.

Your best piece of advice?

Find out as much as you can about the job. Most courses hold open days.

You experience how powerful music can be as a tool to enable change in clients

Oonagh Jones



EDUCATION PROJECT MANAGER

Katy Dent

age 31

(from Connecticut, USA) project manager for music education and new media projects

What and where did you study?

BMus (Hons) at Edinburgh University

How did you get into your chosen field?

I worked as an education manager for an orchestra, and while I was there we got funding from NESTA to devise an online music compositional resource. As a result I got into the world of educational new media.

How competitive is it?

The new media industry is very competitive. However education is an emerging and growing part of it, so more education tech-savvy producers will probably be needed in the industry.

What sort of person does it suit?

Someone who can think laterally and enjoys the challenge of working with emerging technologies while simultaneously making learning objectives outlined in the curriculum exciting for children!

What are the perks?

The creative side, thinking of new and engaging interactive ideas for the web.

And the downsides?

Technology can also let you down!

What's the best piece of advice you can give?

Get work experience.

CAREERS ADVICE

United Kingdom

www.prospects.ac.uk
UK's official graduate careers website
Graduate Prospects
Prospects House
Booth Street East
Manchester
M13 9EP
tel +44 161 2775200

United States

www.juilliard.edu/college/career.html
Juilliard Careers Office
60 Lincoln Center Plaza
New York, NY 10023-6588
tel +1 212 799 5000

www.music-careers.com
Music careers website

*Look-at-me solos were once exclusive to guitarists, says **Amanda Holloway**, but plugged-in violinists are stealing the limelight*

Pump up the

volume



14-year-old rock god Antonio Pontarelli

Anyone who fears the days of the violin are numbered should look at a new breed of string player – the electric rock virtuoso. According to electric pioneer Mark Wood, this is the future. ‘Ever since they discovered electricity, people have been amplifying acoustic instruments. First the guitar, the bass, the piano – and now it’s the turn of the violin.’

Serious string students are discovering for themselves the versatility of their instrument once it’s wired for sound. Bright stars are appearing in rock, jazz, hip-hop, folk – anywhere they can express themselves without having to wear a tie and tails and follow a score.

There’s nothing new about amplifying stringed instruments for added volume. There’s also nothing new about strings in popular music. Many a young professional has worked as a studio session musician – the highly professional Electra Strings have backed everyone from Björk to PJ Harvey, Peter Gabriel to William Orbit. But thrashy, look-at-me solos have until recently been the exclusive preserve of guitarists. ‘In the time of Paganini, the violin was king. It was the virtuoso solo instrument,’ says Wood. ‘But time passed; there were still wonderful soloists and orchestras, but strings didn’t really evolve.

These are children of baby boomers who want their kids to play rock and roll as well as classical or jazz
Mark Wood

Instead, along came the electric guitar, and new virtuosos like Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton were born. And the violin got left behind.’

A Juilliard-trained viola player, Wood not only plays in several rock orchestras (the colourfully named Van Helsing’s Curse and the Trans-Siberian Orchestra) but also has a mission to make strings relevant to children who don’t identify with classical culture. ‘These are the children of baby boomers who grew up with Woodstock, who want their kids to be playing rock and roll as well as classical or jazz.’

Wood demonstrates his handbuilt electric instruments to thousands of schoolkids in the US every week through his Electrify Your Strings programme. After a testosterone-fuelled show of Led Zeppelin meets Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, even apathetic, Grade 2 violinists are queuing to join a rock strings orchestra. Those who are

really serious can buy Wood’s arrow-shaped solid-body Viper violins, his Cobra cellos, his pedals and amps, plus his ‘learn to improvise in easy steps’ system. For more information on Wood’s schools programme, go to www.markwoodmusic.com.

Rock violinists or cellists are not going to see off the electric guitar just yet, but there’s definitely a future for the genre. ‘Popular music is so fragmented that there’s a niche for anything that anyone chooses to play,’ explains music writer Roger Thomas, who lectures in popular music at Brunel University. So what are you waiting for? Clip on the pick-up, turn up the volume and rock on. You have nothing to lose but your neighbours! ■

Here we feature six hot young electric string acts, including a trio of Finnish cellists and a Liverpool jazz violinist, to inspire you...

Bobby Yang plays violin like Jimi Hendrix, not Fritz Kreisler



ASHA MEVLANA

American-born Asha Mevlana has it all. She's just 24, beautiful, a versatile string player with a foot in many camps – acoustic, electric, violin, piano – and many styles. Starting violin and viola aged six, she studied with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra before doing a music degree at Wellesley College. Then she broke out, moved to New York City and 'plunged into the world of alternative string music', as she describes it. For a while she played viola in an avant-garde quartet called Invert! Then she put aside her classical instruments and picked up an electric seven-string Viper designed by Mark Wood (see main text). Since moving to the West Coast, Mevlana has performed in Van Helsing's Curse, a rock/metal stage show produced by Twisted Sister singer Dee Snider. She has appeared with Alanis Morissette on the *Tonight* show, and with another electric strings band, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Now she's creating a 'rock concept' show, Goddess Rock, for two Viper violins, taking in songs by The Beatles, Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Guns N' Roses and Ozzy Osbourne and incorporating choreography and multimedia. www.ashamevlana.com

BILLY THOMPSON

Born into a musical family in the Wirral, near Liverpool, Billy must be the most versatile fiddler in Britain. He veers from jazz to gypsy, folk to fusion, Celtic to classical, using his classical violin both straight and amplified, switching to a purpose-built electric instrument, or even a MIDI-violin. At Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama he took classes with piano legend Keith Tippett. He honed his improvisation skills, reaching the finals of the Young Jazz Musician of the Year competition in 1996 and 1998. He now teaches regular violin improvisation courses at the Benslow Music Trust in Hertfordshire. Billy plays with jazz giant Barbara Thompson's band Paraphernalia, and is a key member of world music band The Amigos. As Amledd, Billy and singer-songwriter Rhian Williams are writing and producing a Welsh-language pop album. This summer Billy joins Barbara Thompson and Paraphernalia for the Never Say Goodbye tour, and in July he tours with The Amigos. More info at www.billythompson.co.uk



BOBBY YANG

Bobby Yang rebelled against his strict Taiwanese parents by insisting on playing the violin – like Jimi Hendrix, not Fritz Kreisler! The 27-year-old's performances are more attention-grabbing than those of the average violin soloist – he leaps around the stage, bending double over the violin and falling to his knees under a single spotlight. He doesn't rate purpose-built electric violins, because they're not responsive enough to cope with his highly physical style. Wouldn't you love to have seen the concert in Aspen when he gave a breakthrough performance of Mozart's Violin Concerto no.3 with improvised cadenzas and a last movement cadenza tribute to Hendrix's *Hey Joe*? In the studio he uses the violin to create orchestral layers, composing parts for the cello, viola and violin and then performing each part on a separate track to create a recorded orchestra. Now based in Atlanta, Yang's latest CD is called *No. 1 Tribute*. Ego? That says it all, really. www.bobbyyang.com

My violin is my voice. I feel like a rapper when I go on stage

Miri Ben-Ari



UNIVERSAL ROCK

ANTONIO PONTARELLI

Antonio Pontarelli is a precocious 14-year-old talent from California who's gone down the rock violin route after winning countless violin competitions from age seven onwards. His heroes are probably older than his parents, and are either dead (Jimi Hendrix) or all but forgotten – such as Jethro Tull, with whom he performed last year. Watching the video of this young teenager strutting and thrusting is a little disturbing, but he generates much excitement among the teenage audience as he soars away on his arrow-shaped Viper violin. He's played classical repertory on stage with major orchestras as well as jazz bands, and has appeared on national television and film. He's obviously a very accomplished musician, in demand as a studio musician, solo artist and songwriter. It will be interesting to see how he makes the transition from being 'America's most talented kid' to a mature musician with something original to say. See him in action at www.antoniomusic.com



MIRI BEN-ARI

Miri Ben-Ari must be the only hip-hop artist who was recommended for a violin scholarship by Isaac Stern. Born in Tel Aviv, she spent two years in the Israeli army, then came to New York to study jazz with Betty Carter. She made her debut in 1999 with the jazz album *Sahara*, and Wynton Marsalis appeared on her second jazz album, *Song of the Promised Land*. But once she heard rap, she was hooked. She's toured with Marsalis and Kanye West, and guested with the likes of Jay-Z, Alicia Keys and Wyclef Jean. She released her first album in this genre, *The Hip Hop Violinist*, in 2005 – it includes a hip-hop version of Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony (presumably just the famous bit). Describing her style she says, 'People tell me when I play, they don't even think it's the violin. That's my voice. I feel like a rapper when I go on stage.' You can hear her on Reebok's current ad campaign, 'I am what I am'. www.miriben-ari.com

◀ APOCALYPTICA

'Heavy cello mayhem' is what these Scandi rockers produce. A classically trained trio from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, they're all heavy metal fans trying to fuse together the (possibly incompatible?) worlds of classical music and hard rock 'while being 100 per cent respectful to both camps'. It started out as a bit of fun and quickly picked up a fan base – though more metal than musical, we suspect. Their first album, *Plays Metallica by Four Cellos*, came out in 1996 and sold 800,000 worldwide. Since then they've released four albums, the last of which came out last year, called *Apocalyptica*. Their videos and stage act feature fire, visions of death and lots of long blond-haired head-banging and frantic sawing. The Apocalyptica cellos have a tendency to sound like guitars, except in the more nostalgic numbers, like *Bittersweet*, from the 2005 album. Catch them live at the Hellfest in Val de Moine, France, on 23 June. www.apocalyptica.com



RTT/OUTDOOR

ON THE MOVE

Violinists have always had it easy when it comes to carrying their tools. But for those with a larger instrument, life has been a bit of a struggle. Now there's a great selection of padded bags with shoulder straps, backpack straps, pockets for bows, sheet music and even a pair of shoes and a dress suit. No longer do you have to rent a van to carry your cello or bass to rehearsal! The new portable cases protect your instrument whether you're cycling, walking or catching the bus. Here are some of the best on the market for string players of all persuasions.

VIOLIN &



HERITAGE

VIOLIN CASE COVER BACKPACKS

- > Weight less than 4lb (1.8kg)

Features:

- > available in oblong or shaped models
- > large external sheet music pocket
- > heavily padded sheet music pocket
- > internal foam padding
- > Price HVB300 shaped cases \$19.99 (£11), HVB310 oblong cases \$24.99 (£14)



MEISEL

VIOLIN CASE 1908

- > Weight 4.6lb (2kg)

Features:

- > shoulder rest
- > sheet music compartments
- > accessory compartment
- > available in 3/4, 1/2 and 1/4 sizes
- > two bow holders
- > Price \$89.95 (£51)

[Viola case (1908V) also available]

VIOLA : VIOLIN

CELLO...



FIEDLER

TORTUGA VIOLIN CASE

- > Weight 7lb 7oz (3.5kg)

Features:

- > detachable pockets for music stand, shoes bag, suit bag
- > multifunctional cushion
- > Price €649/\$774/£442 including accessories, €389/\$464/£265 for case and two pockets



GIG BAGS

STUDENT VIOLIN GIG BAG

- > Weight 7lb 11oz (3.5kg)

Features:

- > EVA moulded, protective and light
- > ergonomic non-slip backpack straps
- > large accessory pocket
- > room for bow in top zip-up section
- > available in orange, yellow, blue, purple
- > Price \$140 (£79.95)

GIG BAGS

ADVANCED VIOLIN GIG BAG

- > Weight 7lb 11oz (3.5kg)

Features:

- > as student bag but with microfibre outer material
- > available in black and wine
- > Price \$158 (£89.95)



RITTER

STYLE1-SERIES VIOLIN CASE CARRIER

- > Weight 4lb 6oz (2kg)

Features:

- > large side-panier pockets
- > A4 music pouch
- > additional front pocket
- > removable MP3 player pocket with headphone access
- > bridge and headstock protectors
- > available in anthracite, blue, green
- > Price \$140 (£79.95)



BOBELOCK

SOFT CELLO BAG

- > Weight less than 4lb (1.8kg)

Features:

- > 1" foam padding
- > easy-to-use backpack system
- > bow sleeves
- > accessory pockets
- > music pocket
- > Price \$129 (£74)



REUNION BLUES CELLO BACKPACK

- > Weight 8lb (3.6kg)

Features:

- > adjustable backpack straps
- > bow case pocket and two additional pockets front and back
- > bridge protector
- > Price \$464 (£265)

BOBELOCK

SMART BAG PADDED COVER FOR HARD-SHELL VIOLIN AND VIOLA CASES

- > Weight 2lb (0.9kg)

Features:

- > fits shaped, oblong and half-moon cases
- > carry handle
- > backpack straps
- > available in black, blue or burgundy
- > Price \$75 (£43)

... & BASS: CELLO & BASS

AMERICAN CASE COMPANY

CONTINENTAL TRAVELER CELLO BAG

- › Weight 4.5lb (2kg)

Features:

- › made of heavy duty materials
- › available in black or brown
- › comes with lifetime warranty
- › Price \$199 (£114)



RITTER STANDARD SERIES CELLO BAG

- › Weight 5lb (2.2kg)

Features:

- › removable padded backpack shoulder strap system
- › removable bow pouch
- › large music pouch, front pocket
- › MP3 player pocket, mobile phone pouch
- › Price \$175 (£99.95)

RITTER SERIES DELUXE CELLO BAG

- › Weight 8lb 13oz (4kg)
- › features as the standard series, with added padding
- › Price \$219 (£125)

[bass bag RCDB900 also available]



CUSHY

CELLO BAG

- › Weight 5lb (2.2kg)

Features:

- › ergonomically placed handles, shoulder strap
- › full-length zipped music pocket
- › bow pocket, accessory pocket
- › padded bow sheath
- › Price \$149.99 (£85)

CUSHY

DELUXE BASS BAG

- › Weight 6lb (2.7kg)

Features:

- › four handles, shoulder strap
- › extra thick bridge pad, neck restraint
- › large accessory pocket, music pocket
- › Price \$299 (£149)

BOBELOCK

SOFT BASS BAG

- › Weight 9lb (4kg)
- › available in four sizes
- › features as Bobelock cello bag, but without backpack system
- › Price \$260 (£149)



REUNION BLUES

UPRIGHT BASS BACKPACK

- › Weight 15lb (7kg) for 3/4 size to 17lb (7.7kg) for full size
- › features as the cello backpack
- › Price for 3/4 size \$658 (£375), for full size \$678 (£387)



KOLSTEIN DELUXE PADDED BASS COVER

- › Weight less than 10lb (4.4kg)

Features:

- › protective interior 1" foam padding
- › 'thermal dissipation' to regulate temperature
- › solid, padded shoulder strap
- › pleated bow cover and accessories pocket
- › rear music pocket
- › Price \$245 (£140) plus shipping

CONTACT DETAILS

Bobelock www.bobelock.com

Fiedler www.cellofiedler.de

Gig Bags www.gig-bags.com

Kolstein www.kolstein.com

Meisel www.meiselmusic.com

Reunion Blues www.reunionblues.com

Ritter www.ritter-bags.com

Shar Music (suppliers for Cushy, Heritage and American Case Company)
www.sharmusic.com



DAN CALUS

MY MONTH

Cellist

DENISE DJOKIC

by Robert Markow

'What did you do for your summer vacation?' is a topic nearly every student gets to write about at least once in the course of his or her schooling. But what about for your Christmas vacation? Canadian cellist Denise Djokic (pronounced JOE-kitch) can answer that in one word: PRACTICE! Here's a fairly typical month for this 25-year-old performer

MOST MUSICIANS CAN TAKE A FEW

weeks off at this time of year, but I spent nearly the entire month of December learning Prokofiev's Symphony-Concerto, that veritable Mount Everest of the solo cello repertory.

I knew I was going to be terribly busy for five or six months prior to the performances, so I had to tell my manager at least a year in advance that I would need a continuous stretch of time to learn the work. If I hadn't done this, I knew I'd never learn it in time. A day or two here and there sandwiched between recitals and other engagements just wouldn't suffice.

The Symphony-Concerto is so strenuous that you can easily overwork yourself and develop arm problems. So, for a solid month I had no performances, no rehearsals, no recording sessions, no distractions of any kind. I spent most of the time at the cottage near my home town of Halifax, Nova Scotia, with a magnificent view of the sea and no excuses not to practise.

I practised no more than four or five hours a day, but it was intense. Paradoxically, it was also relaxing. I was able to get up in the morning and plan just what I wanted to accomplish that day, which was sheer luxury since you never get that kind of time when you're on the road, which for me is most of the time.

As if the Prokofiev alone weren't enough for one programme, I coupled it with the

Ligeti concerto, and performed them in tandem four times in eight days around Greater Montreal during mid-January. I'd already done the Ligeti concerto before, in Mexico City with Yannick Nézet-Séguin [music director of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain] conducting. While we were in Mexico together, Yannick asked me if I'd like to perform the Prokofiev with him in Montreal sometime. He also wanted me to play the Ligeti again in Montreal. I accepted on both counts, little realising that he meant on the same programme! Well, I love a challenge, and embraced the idea wholeheartedly.

After the Prokofiev and Ligeti concerts I have two days free, then I'm off for a series of concerts in northern Alberta in late January and early February (Brrrrrr!!) as part of a project called Encore Six, which involves six musicians who bring classical music to remote communities in Canada. Looking down the road a bit I have a tour of Germany and Hungary with the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra and a visit to Manaus, that legendary town in central Brazil on the shores of the Amazon. In other words, lots of travel! ■

Denise Djokic's latest release with pianist David Jalbert, 'Folklore', on Endeavor Classics, has just been nominated for a 2006 Juno Award