

tuneUP



Welcome



Dear Budding Cellists,

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and most important of all – a warm welcome back to Cello Club Magazine, your bi-annual guide to all things cello!

These past months have no doubt been stressful ones, and if that's turning cello practice into a chore, never fear – Hannah Reeves is on page 6 to help you out of your creative rut. If you're feeling old-timey, scroll to page 4 to see how we can grow as musicians by studying sewing machines of the 1940s. And if you contributed a piece of your own, it can be found in the 'CelloKidz' mag here!



If you missed out this time but would like to inspire us with your musical experiences, regale us with tales of adventures with your cello or let your imagination loose by telling a musical story, email me at noahmax100@aol.com and the best submissions will feature in the next issue.

Wishing you all a joyous and music-filled festive period!

Warmest wishes,



Noah Max

Editor-in-Chief of Cello Club Magazine

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tuneUP!

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Leonard Rose and his School of Bowing - Part II



Leonard Rose

Mr Rose taught Lynn Harrell and Yo-Yo Ma, and in both cases one hears a sound that projects throughout any given concert hall.

For Mr Rose, sound was emotion, carrying all the feeling and meaning that a cellist can convey. So the most important work of a good bow arm is to create beautiful sounds. We are forever exploring ways to get the strings to ring.

Cellists should speak as well as sing: in other words, we should be able to produce consonants and vowels in our playing.

For the consonants, the *collé* stroke is a must. It's produced by movements of the fingers on the bow, which cause the hairs of the bow to engage with the string in the same way as when we say the word 'Pow!'. The hard consonant 'P' is produced by the explosive force of the breath and the oppositional force of the lips coming together. The bow remains on the string – in fact, *collé* literally means 'stuck' or 'glued'. I call it a 'bite and scoop' stroke, or 'bow pizzicato'. You bite the string

with the hairs of the bow, making a little scooping movement.

For the vowel sounds, there must be a smooth legato stroke, with an imperceptible bow change. And here Mr Rose speaks about three elements: bow pressure, bow speed and contact point.

Instead of pressure, I prefer to use the words 'pull and push' of the bow on the string (sideways movement with a slight 'scoop'), as 'pressure' can imply pressing down into the string, which creates a lot of unhelpful body tension.

Speed of bow is also a most important factor: with too little speed, the string stops ringing, and with too much speed it loses contact with the string. Just the right amount is the secret!

And finally the contact point: where in the area between fingerboard and bridge does the 'sweet spot' lie for the sound production? Only experimentation will bring us closer to the answer: all three factors have to be well-balanced in the mix, much as when baking a good bread one needs a balance of flour, yeast and water! I am still exploring sound production many years after studying with Mr Rose. I invite you to do the same.

He opened the door onto a very big question!

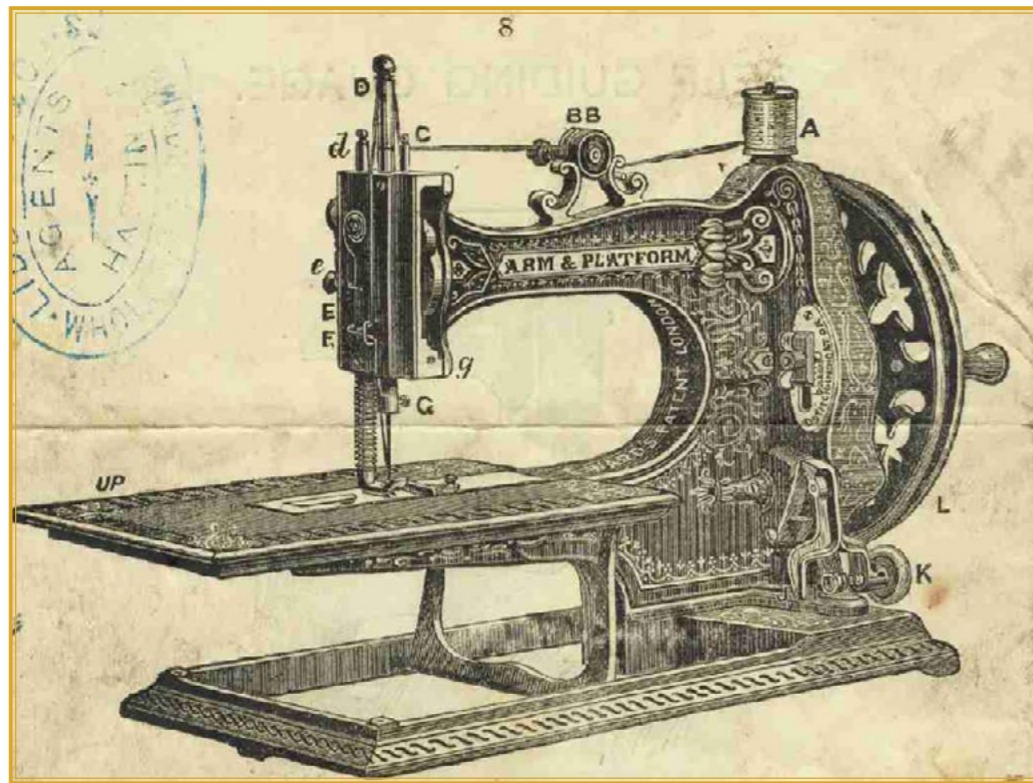
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZCZwvcbSjM>

by Selma Gokcen

Measure Twice, Cut Once



Sometime during the wetter months of last year, I was in Belsize Park at 9am on a Sunday morning enjoying another inspiring lesson with my fabulous teacher William Bruce. He was as full of joyous energy as ever, and being his first student of the day, he couldn't wait to share with me his latest discovery with me.



Today, it was a page from an authentic 1949 sewing manual published by Singer, an American manufacturer who produced sewing machines. William encouraged me to read it closely and decide how much of the advice given could be applied to what we do cellistically. The result was remarkably profound, and quite possibly life-altering...

'Prepare yourself mentally for sewing. Think about what you are going to do.'

Practice requires a specific mental state. If we sit down with our cello without the vaguest idea of what we plan to achieve, we won't practice effectively and will in the long run damage ourselves and our playing. Not everybody likes to micromanage their practice schedule, but setting a time limit, planning your breaks and setting yourself goals may help.

'Never approach sewing with a sigh or lackadaisically.'

Attitude is essential! Every teen knows that violent mood swings can put one off practicing for a week, or indeed draw one to become obsessed with it at the expense of all else. If we don't enjoy practice, we're more reluctant to approach our cello next time round, so it's worth ensuring that a positive approach is taken at all times.

'Good results are difficult when indifference predominates.'

True creativity cannot exist in isolation. To improve your playing and your

musicianship, you have to truly want something magical to happen, from the bottom of your heart. However technically adept you are, a real musician is one who is never indifferent to the music they are creating.

'Never try to sew with a sink full of dirty dishes or beds unmade. When there are urgent housekeeping chores, do these first so your mind is free to enjoy your sewing.'

This is a contentious piece of advice: there are always more reasons not to do something than to do it, particularly in creative spheres, and when there are a million and one bite size tasks to be completed in the short term outside the practice room, it becomes very easy to procrastinate and never get any work done! However, if there are pressing issues at hand that will keep your thoughts elsewhere while you work, find a way to put your mind at rest before you start on the cello as otherwise nothing you try and do will stick.

'Keep a little bag full of French chalk near your sewing machine to dust your fingers at intervals.'

The obvious parallel here is rosin! Keep your bow nice and sticky, while remembering that different pieces may require different techniques, i.e. you might prefer playing your Bach suites without rosin in the way. A wider comparison could be the importance of keeping your cello well maintained. And the same goes for yourself – practice with a bottle of water by your chair and watch as your productivity rises exponentially...!

'When you sew, make yourself as attractive as possible. Have your hair in order, powder and lipstick put on. Wear a clean dress. If you are constantly fearful that a visitor will drop in or your husband will come home and you will not look neatly put together, you will not enjoy your sewing as you should.'

This is clearly misogynistic droll typical of '40s Britain and is to be ignored! However, you may feel that dressing well and taking pride in your appearance improves your work ethic: I feel it's always worth dressing up for a performance as it improves stage presence and therefore, by association, confidence. It's as much about what you as an individual bring to your cello as it is about your cello itself.



by Noah Max



Practice Makes Perfect Pleasure



Practice. That dreaded 'P' word. At least, that's how I used to regard cello practice: a chore, something to be 'got over with', a tick on my lengthy to-do list. That was until I started working in the hustle and bustle of London, where 'spare time' really did come at a premium, and I began to view practice not as a chore but as something to be enjoyed, savoured and valued as time away from life's daily grind.

If this is how it is for you, then bravo chief! You appreciate that practice can be a pleasurable and therapeutic activity if you let it, unlike some of the ferociously talented professional players I know who detest practicing as a necessary form of drudgery. If you fall into this practice-hating category, you really are not alone, and the good news is, it doesn't have to be like that. The following techniques may help you, over time, to gently re-wire your thinking so that practicing is no longer a burden on your time and energy, but a fulfilling way to relax your body and calm your mind.

1. Create your own calm kingdom

Define the start of your practice session by 'centring' for a few minutes. How you do so is up to you. I tend to sit quietly with the cello, feeling the floor beneath my feet while having an awareness of the space around me. I breathe in for four counts and breathe out for six. Think of it as a process of creating your own peaceful space. As *The Little Book of Calm* suggests, 'Be the king of your own calm kingdom'.

2. Just breathe....

Did you know that if you breathe too shallowly, it can increase muscular fatigue, tension and pain? Breathing deeply is not only relaxing but may help to counteract a common string players' habit of holding their breath whilst playing. Try steadily bowing some open strings whilst breathing slowly and deeply, and maintaining this increased flow of oxygen throughout your practice (easier said than done, but persevere - the long-term health benefits are immense!).

3. Be gentle on yourself

Don't set unreasonably high expectations for your practice session. Give yourself achievable goals, and be specific (e.g. decide that you will spend the first half hour working on the opening bars of Beethoven's Sonata in A). This way, you will have a feeling of satisfaction at the end of the session when you have met all your goals, a feeling that will carry you through to your next session.

4. Leave perfectionism at the door

This is really important in order to ensure that your practice session is as enjoyable as it was meant to be. Perfectionism is an admirable character trait but it can lead to anger and frustration if you allow it to take over. Instead of "practice makes perfect", let "practice makes pleasure" be your mantra. Relax in the knowledge that you are a fantastic player, and that making mistakes is a vital part of the learning process. Learn to celebrate mistakes. Laugh at them. Howl, even.

5. Play like no one's listening

In your calm creative kingdom, you are the boss. If you want to devote two hours to nailing your F# minor scales and arpeggios or one of those tendonitis-inducing Cossman double-stop exercises, then do so. Ignore any complaints from family members or, better still, calmly point out that what you are practicing involves an equivalent level of skill and precision as uni-cycling with your eyes closed across a narrow ridge while balancing a satsuma on your nose.

6. Smile even when things are going wrong

Not every practice session is going to be successful. There will be times when you feel as though you have one finger and four thumbs, or your cello has decided that squeaking and groaning is preferable to making a decent sound. My advice is to smile, as smiling has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety while increasing task productivity. Things will start going well when you smile, and when they do, allow yourself to feel just a teeny-weeny bit superhuman.

7. Plan for 15 minutes

The fact is, you won't always feel like practicing. That's normal. At times like these, tell yourself that you will practice for 15 minutes only, and plan how you're going to fill them. Once you get going, I'll bet you a bar of chocolate that you will actually accomplish more like 45 minutes of productive practice, without actually noticing. If you've had enough at that point, don't fight it, just click the kettle on and congratulate yourself on 45 minutes very well spent.

8. Watch television

You're probably thinking that I'm a few sandwiches short of a picnic, but hear me out. Watching one of your favourite TV programmes or films, particularly whilst practicing something mechanical (such as scales or studies), can help alleviate any mental and/or physical strain as your attention is focused on something comfortably familiar while your fingers are getting on with reproducing learnt patterns. If it doesn't work for you, then fine, but do try it... you may be surprised what cello playing feats you can accomplish during a few back-to-back episodes of *Buffy*.

Happy practicing, and remember: relax, enjoy, and celebrate daily the fact that you play the beautiful, wondrous, almost other-worldly instrument that is the cello (not that I'm biased, at all). What a privilege!

by Hannah Reeves



The Étude Kings: Auguste-Joseph Francomme (April 10, 1808 – January 21, 1884)



Influential French Cellist, Composer,
Teacher and Performer
Notable work: 12 Etudes for Cello, Op.35

Welcome to the fifth instalment of The Étude Kings series. Let us begin with a recap of what an étude is before delving into the life of cellist Francomme.

What Is An Étude?

Étude is a French word meaning study. Musical études are instrumental compositions, usually short and of considerable difficulty, designed to provide practice material for perfecting a particular musical skill.

Who Was Auguste-Joseph Francomme?

Born in Lille, France, Francomme, "the king of the French school of cello playing", began learning the cello from a young age. He enrolled at the local Lille Music Conservatoire where he was taught by M. Mas and Pierre Baumann. He continued his studies at the prestigious Conservatoire de Paris under Jean-Henri Levasseur and Louis-Pierre Norblin where he received the First Prize award in his first year.

Francomme began his performing career playing in various orchestras and opera houses until he was

appointed to the position of solo cellist at Sainte-Chapelle (The Holy Chapel) in 1828. Francomme belonged to the founding ranks of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire orchestra. He was a founding member of the highly successful Alard Quartet which included violinist Jean-Delphin Alard, teacher of composer Pablo de Sarasate, and pianist Charles Hallé, creator of the Hallé Orchestra.

In 1846, Francomme returned to the Paris Conservatoire, succeeding his teacher Norlin as the head professor of cello, where he would continue teaching up until his death. Among his pupils were Jules Delsart (who succeeded his master's post), Louis Hegyesi, Ernest Gillet and Charles Lebouc, to name just a few. Outside of his teaching career, Francomme transcribed many works for cello, including: Mozart and Beethoven violin sonatas, Chopin Nocturnes & Preludes. He also rewrote the cello parts for Chopin's Polonaise Brillante, Op. 3.

With the exception of a trip to England in 1856, Francomme hardly left Paris, where he became a central figure of the city's musical life. In Paris, Francomme made friends with Felix Mendelssohn and more closely Frédéric Chopin, with whom he frequently performed. In a collaboration between the cellist and Chopin, they composed a concert duet for piano and cello on themes from the opera *Robert the Devil* by Meyerbeer (1832). When Chopin composed his Cello Sonata in 1845-1846, he wrote on it: "To my friend Francomme." In the cellist's own inscribed copy of this work, now in the National Library in Paris, there is a notice: "The violoncello part of the sonata for piano and cello by Chopin is written by me according

to his dictation." Their friendship lasted until the death of the Polish musician. Francomme was also the dedicatee of Charles-Valentin Alkan's cello sonata.

Francomme belonged to the last generation of cellists who didn't use an endpin, which also included the illustrious cellists Piatti and Gruetzmacher. Francomme believed the use of an endpin made the cello sound unnatural: instead, he would hold the cello off the floor by cradling it between his calves.

His left hand was renowned for its deft, precise, and expressive powers of execution.

A contemporary characterised his playing: "Enchanting tone, a great deal of grace and expression in the manner of singing and rare purity of intonation – that is what distinguishes this artist." Some critics however, reproached him for not putting enough fire into his playing: "he plays the cello in a manner that is elegant, easy, clean, but without inspiration or passion. His style is pure, but cold."

Francomme was fortunate to have owned two Stradivarius cellos. The first was the *De Munck* Stradivarius of 1730. The second he acquired in 1843, the *Duport* Stradivarius from the son of Jean-Louis Duport for the then-record sum of 22,000 French francs.

During Francomme's time, there were two trends in the development of the instructive teaching genre of the 19th-century cello literature: the first (more characteristic of the German school) involves numerous schematic études and daily exercises aimed at teaching only technical skill, the second (more typical of the French and Russian schools and used by David Popper) arose out of the aspiration to combine purely technical and artistically expressive requirements. The latter approach was pioneered by French cellists Jean-Pierre Duport and Jean-Louis Duport and was adopted by Francomme in his notable works *The Twelve Capriccios* Op. 7, and *12 Études* Op.35 which feature complicated double stops along with chord and stroke techniques.

Francomme was acknowledged as the most distinguished French cellist of his day. In the year of his death 1884, he was decorated with the Légion d'honneur for his contributions to music. He is remembered for his contributions to the refinement of the bowing technique – elegant, sweet, and light. His *Capriccios* and *Etudes* remain a valuable pedagogical resource for teachers and their students to this present day.

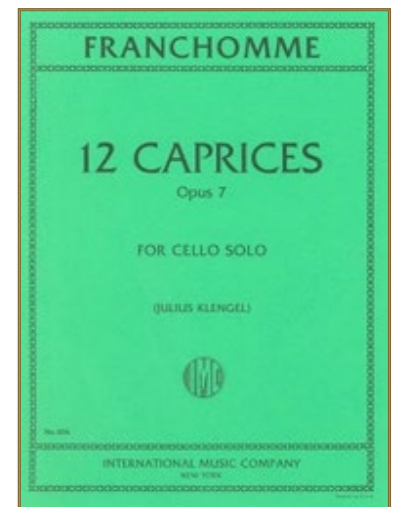
Compositions for Cello

Francomme composed numerous charming, virtuosic cello compositions, most of which are out of print and have never been recorded. Some of these works include:

- 12 Capriccios for Cello, Op.7
- 3 Capriccios, Op.24
- Cello Concerto No.1, Op.33
- 12 Etudes for Cello, Op.35



Did you know many of the above works are freely available if you visit: imslp.org



by Rico Borza