



## PRACTICE DIARY THOMAS GOULD

The British violinist describes a recent week's practice, including reacquainting himself with his six-string electric violin



**Monday** Today I concentrate on my left arm, which has been feeling a bit tight recently. I dig out the violin solo from the Benedictus of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and vary the speed and amplitude of my vibrato, all the time checking for tension in my shoulders and arms and that my right wrist remains unblocked.

**Tuesday** In a couple of weeks I'm playing Nico Muhly's concerto for six-string electric violin, *Seeing Is Believing*, and today I refresh my technique on that instrument. The hardest thing is to get the bow arm levels just right for each string. Having the extra low C and F strings makes it easy to accidentally brush a neighbouring string as there is much less clearance between them.

**Wednesday** Another element in the Muhly is using a loop station to layer solo lines. This offers the greatest opportunity for public humiliation, so today I make sure I've still got a grasp of how the technology works – I don't want to kick a floor pedal for a fade out and inadvertently start a 12/8 shuffle instead.

**Thursday** Today I think about bow distribution, and practise an exercise that the cellist Riki Gerardy showed me. You play

a legato passage at tempo, half-speed and then quarter-speed, holding the bow normally. Then you hold the bow halfway up the stick and repeat the passage at tempo, half-speed and quarter-speed. Then you repeat the process, holding the bow three-quarters of the way up the stick. When you go back to playing normally, the bow feels as if it has magically grown in length.

**Friday** My work as leader and director requires a good knowledge of the score, and I like to play from a part that I've marked up with lots of cues. A necessary evil of a leader's job is bowing front-desk parts – and the RSI-inducing tedium of rubbing out previous markings, in today's case, in Dmitry Sitkovetsky's arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

**Saturday** Today I'm working on three pieces by Unsuk Chin for a concert with London Sinfonietta. Learning new repertoire quickly, especially contemporary repertoire, can feel a bit like computer programming. I enjoy the challenge of trying to find the best fingerings and bowings for a tricky passage, rather in the way that people enjoy Sudoku. These pieces would be rated Killer.

**Sunday** A little while ago I had to learn Paganini's Caprice no.5, and I surprised myself by actually being able to play it. I periodically play through it to keep it in my fingers, thinking about coordination between the hands and string-crossing.

*Thomas Gould's recording of Nico Muhly's Seeing Is Believing is released on 6 June (Decca)*



## MY FAVOURITE BOW GIOVANNI LUCCHI

Cello bow by Eugène Sartory, 1920



**THIS 1920 SARTORY** cello bow is really quite extraordinary. Its curve is perfect – the bow adheres to the strings from the frog to the tip, enabling the musician to produce a uniform sound. The stick is made from magnificent wood, with the subtleties typical of Sartory's finest period of production. The head is superb and elegant, and the frog is crafted with care and finesse. It has beautiful medullar rays, characteristic of Madagascar ebony, and a Paris eye. The condition of the bow is excellent and it

produces an exceptionally pleasing sound. It is not a typical antique collector's bow; it has maintained good elasticity, and because of this it can satisfy the needs of the most demanding musician. Fortunately, the bow's owners have not used it for long periods – it has only been used on special occasions. It is elegant and functional: that is why it is my favourite bow.

*Giovanni Lucchi celebrates the 40th anniversary of the opening of his Cremona workshop this year*

GOULD PHOTO NELSON STOUT

## FRESH FACE CAROLINE GOULDING

**THE 18-YEAR-OLD VIOLINIST** from Port Huron, Michigan, US, received a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in March, and describes the next few



months as 'an exciting time of transition'. This summer she attends the Marlboro Festival for the first time, before moving to Boston to study with Donald Weilerstein at the New England Conservatory. Goulding is looking forward to her first assignment with her new teacher – learning the Sibelius Violin Concerto. She says: 'It's such a beautiful, virtuosic piece, but I find it quite intimidating. I can't wait to discover its challenges, though, and to see how my strengths and weaknesses match up against it.'

Despite impressive achievements to date – Goulding was a first prizewinner at the Young Concert Artists International Audition in 2009 and last year her debut album garnered a Grammy nomination – she is still making discoveries, and acknowledges that sometimes the only way to do that is the hard way: 'I learnt a very valuable lesson this semester – don't book performances of nine different concertos within a two-week period. I thank God that I'm young and my memory is still intact!'

