

RAYMOND SCHRYER

I like to interview clients to get a sense of who they are, which helps me in what I recommend and what I can offer. When we first spoke on the phone, Raphael told me he played solo Bach a lot, so there was an issue with tuning and retuning the cello quickly: I use custom-made Planetary pegs, which make it easy to tune. He is just out of university, and likes composition and playing not only classical music but also other genres: he's in a fusion rock band and records a lot, so he needed to be able to use a pick-up but also wanted good sound quality. We talked about this and I researched what would be appropriate as a pick-up. One of the other features I recommended was a carbon-fibre L-beam embedded in the neck and into the heel. It reinforces the neck and improves the sound. I use it on all my cellos now. There are often issues with cellos changing in different environments and this helps. Being of a younger generation, Raphael was happy with innovative approaches.

I started on the cello as soon as he committed and I sent him pictures throughout the process. Going by his tonal needs, I selected wood for the top that had the highest speed of sound. I calculate this using a density reading and a formula that German luthier Martin Schleske figured out. I do this when I'm buying the wood and then when I've dimensioned it properly and prepared the top for glueing. I use two different cello models: the Stradivari B form, which is more for chamber musicians, and a Francesco Rugeri model, which has a big sound and is great for soloists — Raphael asked for the Rugeri.

He gave me full rein. I prefer not to have a lot of changes to my working style. We had conversations about varnish. I don't antique instruments but in time the cello gets nicked and scratched and that's all part of the ageing process. When I touch up these bruises I apply an antique approach. It's hard to touch up varnish to keep it new-looking, so you add a bit of age at that stage. I'll do that in a couple of years when I see the cello again.

RAPHAEL REACTED WELL to the photos and we decided that I would bring the cello up to him, and spend a couple of days with him. Then he could play on it and I could make adjustments. I took it to Ottawa, and as he began to play there was a huge smile on his face and he couldn't

► **With no antiquing marks, the finished cello's top and scroll have a pristine look**



▲ **Raymond Schryer used a model by Francesco Rugeri for the cello**

stop playing. It was exactly the kind of reaction I hope for! The only thing I had to move was the weight under the tailpiece, which was made by Ted White and can be adjusted for wolf notes. Otherwise he responded well to my set-up.

The soundpost, especially in a cello, needs to be strong and tight — a cello vibrates and breaks in quickly, so within two or three months it needs a longer soundpost. A colleague in Ottawa, Guy Harrison, takes care of some of my instruments in the area, and after three months Raphael

brought the cello to him to fit a longer soundpost. This

is the time period in which a client will start complaining that their instrument is not performing the same way, and that's why. If you wait too long you'll have problems. Set-up is a huge issue with new instruments. For the first couple of years you need to keep a close eye on it. I spent a good two hours talking to Raphael about these issues, and he took notes. The more you explain all the details, the more a customer can understand

if there's a problem. ■

INTERVIEWS BY ARIANE TODES

