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## **AUTUMN 2010 NEWSLETTER**

**FROM THE U.K.'s LARGEST SUPPLIER OF VIOLIN FAMILY PRODUCTS**

10<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Well doom & gloom seems to be the order of the day, every news that I listen to seems to be more dire than the last. While I appreciate that it is going to be tough for a while, it is still better than if we had lived through the Great Depression in the 1930's. Whilst financially the state we see ourselves in is perhaps in reality even more serious, we cannot anticipate the actual percentage level of unemployment that existed then. I remember my grandfather saying that he used to cycle 25 miles every day to try and find work, and he was a skilled tool worker. Can you imagine anyone in this day and age being prepared to cycle a 50 mile round trip on the off chance of a days work. More chance that they would get the car out or go on the internet. Things really could be a lot worse, but this is no consolation for those affected, and we must feel sorry for them.

Anyway on a much brighter note (no pun intended), we really have been very pleased with this Summer, sales have been well over the usual for the time of year, although mainly on larger items. Strings and consumable sales are much lower than usual, and as we still are maintaining our low prices, I guess that this is largely down to making the strings last longer. We have been notified of several largish increases in string prices, so I suggest not leaving it too long. I know that the Internet sellers sometimes seem to offer lower prices, but how old are their stocks?

Recently a customer sent us some strings that they had purchased on the Internet, not only were they rusty/corroded, but they had gone curly (they were gut strings). Gut strings have a very short shelf life, and need to be stored correctly in sealed containers at a constant temperature. You cannot treat them like guitar strings! D'Addario E strings have a very great tendency to rust, they always have, even though they are have been supplied in sealed packs that mean we cannot check them. The new packaging that we requested is now clear on one side, so hopefully if there is any problem with them we will see it before sending them. We have also had incidents of strings being sent back to us that we did not supply. We keep records of all orders, with stock information, and we will always be supportive should there be any problems with items we supply. Sadly on the occasion that strings are returned to us, when they have been purchased from somewhere else that does not have such a comprehensive string return policy, we are unable to help. I appreciate that this is not the norm, but we do get upset if we are asked to sort out someone else's problems. This is very much the danger of using Internet retailers where you have little or no comeback should the goods be faulty. I cannot stress too strongly, that if you want to get support you need to deal with reputable dealers, who have a shop front, and are thus constrained by the Sale of Goods Act, Trading Standards and Consumer Protection Legislation. How many websites of internet seller have a stated and legitimate business address? Many run from peoples back rooms / garages, and to them Returned goods are not an option. It is like using builder's whose van doesn't have their home address or a Land line Telephone Number!

We are here to help and provide a service and we intend being there for a long time, but that can only happen if you use us!

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## Contd.

Anyway we do have **GOOD NEWS!** Whilst we are still experiencing supply problems and to some extent also quality problems with BAM cases, we are pleased that GEWA have at last listened, and have started producing some extremely good new cases. Currently they are only for Violins and Cellos, although the Viola cases are due soon. The Violin Cases have just arrived, and come in 3 weights; 1.8Kg, 2.0Kg and 2.3Kg. The Specifications and prices are on our Specification sheets accessible from the Hyperlink on the Violin Case page. They are all Carbon Fibre based cases, and as always with Gewa Products, the quality is second to none. The prices are extremely reasonable considering the features. The 2Kg and 2.3Kg also have easily removeable music bags. No fiddly nuts like the BAM's. These cases make the BAM cases seem extremely 'low tech' especially as the BAM cases are only made of A.B.S.(plastic). They are also much slimmer than conventional cases. The cello cases are also available in 3 weights; 2.9Kg, 3.3Kg and 3.9Kg and again all of the information and prices are in the Specification sheets accessible from the Hyperlink on the Cello Case page. The prices that we have negotiated with Gewa mean that we are launching these cases at about 20% less than the RRP. How long that can last depends on the level of sales, but based upon what we are seeing at the moment, I hope this will be available for some time.

This does mean that we do now have an alternative to the BAM cases which have been exasperating us for so long, and what's more these Gewa cases seriously outperform the BAM's, and with typical German attention to detail and quality.

Up until recently this year prices had remained relatively stable, but instrument prices are beginning to rocket. Our Catalogue and website of course show the new prices, but although we have sold a large amount of instruments from 2009 stock, we do still have a few left at those prices. However the new stock price will have to apply to that now coming in. The UK £ still experiences swings both ways, making it extremely difficult to estimate prices from goods outside of the UK, which is of course, about 99%! We will still price goods based upon actual prices paid after taking into account the currency exchange rate on the day of purchase. This of course is most noticeable with the more expensive items like instruments, bows and cases. We try to absorb the changes on smaller items, as it is a nightmare trying to remember all of the different prices, so it is easier to ignore it. This cannot continue for long, and I expect that we, like most other retailers will end up sorting out the anomalies when the VAT rate goes up to 20%. This means that there is bound to be a significant price rise in January, and we are trying to ensure that we have the stock to supply before the VAT rate changes. Goods ordered before 1<sup>st</sup> January, that for some reason we are unable to supply due to stock shortages will be exempt from the VAT rise, as we will absorb it. This generous offer means that we expect that sales will be uncharacteristically high for this last quarter of 2010, so please be patient. Also don't forget that with new instrument prices now being submitted, now is the time to buy an instrument, as it will most certainly not be as inexpensive again.

We intend re-printing the catalogue in the early part of 2011, but will only do so if prices have returned to some degree of stability. If you are reading this you already have access to all of our prices, as the Website is always up to date, unless our web designer has disappeared off to China to see his in laws! We are always happy to send out a copy of the Draft Catalogue which is also always up to date, but if prices are still unstable in the New Year, we will delay it again. I am not prepared to just issue a catalogue knowing that it will be out of date before it hits your door step. That is commercial suicide and upsetting if you order an item from the new catalogue finding that the price was wrong, as has happened frequently to one of our competitors who seems to issue catalogue's at the most bizarre times and at the drop of a hat!

Royal Mail, are still regularly increasing their prices above the rate of inflation, causing a real headache to all Mail Order type companies. As the size and thickness of the package are the predominant area of concern, our postal charges are based on what it costs us for the stamp & packaging, but we cannot compromise the packaging without possible damage to the contents of your parcel/packet. Please bear with us, we keep trying to find alternatives, and on many occasions we are opting to use Couriers Bags rather than Royal Mail to reduce the cost to you.

Remember that we are always pleased to welcome you to try out our instruments and bows in our trying out rooms, but please, during this busy period in particular, please phone before coming to ensure that we can accommodate you at the time you require. We like to be able to give you our full attention. We will also try to be available on some Saturdays, but this is **STRICTLY BY APPOINTMENT**.

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