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WINTER 2009 NEWSLETTER

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

This Newsletter is going to be brief primarily because much of what is in this Newsletter is as the result of the collapse of the UK £, and the cost increases that we have been warning you about over the last 5 Newsletters.

It gives me no pleasure to say I told you so, but the writing has been on the wall for the last 2 years, and we have really just got the greed of the banks to blame for most of our current problems.

Whilst buying your way out of a recession has worked previously in the U.S.A., the situation in which we now find ourselves is rather more severe, and I fear that the Governments' approach is unlikely to succeed in the short term, rather it may make things worse. However if you have money in savings accounts that is now of course earning you little to nothing, then now is a good time to buy. Prices generally for goods sourced overseas are going to increase in price due to the weak pound, so to buy what you require now would make good commonsense.

As I have been warning the Price Rises are hitting us hard and frequently. No week passes without which we are advised of another cost increase, and it is never a single digit percentage! These price rises whilst largely attributable to the weak pound, there are also price rises from manufacturers who have decided that they cannot absorb them any longer. Overall we have incurred numerous increases which equate to around 20% on average over the last few months (with the Exception of strings which are more variable). Because we have held off the price rises on some items for too long to try and soften the blow, there is no way that we can absorb the increases any more. We do not increase prices of stock bought in pre this round of price increases, but regrettably sales have been so good over the last months, we have little old stock left, so largely these prices are across the board. Quality Instruments and bow prices, will perhaps be the exception, as these are naturally slower to turnover, so these will only increase in price as we replace them. So it really is a matter of buying now rather than later if you wish to save money on these items.

Our Web Designer is currently slaving over a hot calculator updating the prices of the 10,000 or so items on our website, and we are currently updating the string prices, which will be uploaded as soon as we have completed them.

We will still aim to be the most competitive supplier of all things Violin Family, but we are temporarily withdrawing our lowest price guarantee, as there are many Web based companies who are consciously not updating their prices to draw you in, but when you try to order, don't be surprised if they either don't have stock, or suddenly you find the price is more than the website says. This is why we are holding all of our prices until our web site is updated, as it would be dishonest any other way. However it does mean that when the prices are posted, the price rise will unfortunately be immediate.

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If you are a new visitor to our website, or a new customer, welcome. It is sad that you have joined us at such a depressing period, but be assured, our friendly and helpful manner will hopefully cheer you up. We look forward to being of assistance, we are only at the end of a telephone.

Whilst we usually reissue our Mail Order catalogue bi-annually, due to the volatility of prices and currencies, we have decided to hold off for probably the next year, and hope that things stabilise sooner rather than later. The 2007/2008 Catalogue is therefore still current, although the prices shown will not be correct. However the catalogue is still an invaluable tool to all players. In the meantime the website will show current prices, for those with Internet access. Fortunately whilst there are only a few new items, which of course are on the website, there are certainly not as many as in some years. Price rises are the main problem area, but of course that is why we are holding off the catalogue update anyway!

As I have written previously our Bow stocks are really high, and the Website has a representative list, or alternatively we can send you a copy. We are not stocking the Top end Bows (eg £2000 plus), however we are always happy to recommend a reputable source. Bear in mind that with our price structure, our bows are around 25 – 30% cheaper than the competition, for the same bows. We also have a strict policy of not adding spurious makers stamps to unstamped bows. We are, of course, pleased to send you a selection of bows to try, within your price range (regrettably not student bows). There is currently NO CHARGE for this service unlike most of our competitors, we even pay the outgoing carriage, you just promise to look after them whilst in your charge, and pay the return postage, by Special Delivery. This service is only offered to players seriously interested in a Bow purchase, not as a loan service, which unfortunately a few players seem to think. We have noticed a small trend of players asking for an approval set of bows, then we hear from another source that this particular player's bow is being rehaired and they needed a bow to continue playing with. This we feel is unacceptable, as I am sure you do, because we wish to keep the service free! We always suggest that a player, especially those playing a lot, have a spare bow, it is the professional thing to do. Where we hear that our service, which is designed to be of assistance, is being abused, regrettably we will of course take appropriate action. The Violin industry is small, and there is obviously interaction between businesses, so please if you have to have your bow rehaired/repared by someone other than us, ask them for a loan bow, they should be offering that service, or alternatively buy a spare, it does not need to be hugely expensive, just adequate.

Having sold out of our previous container of fantastic Hidersine Giovanni Violin outfits, we are now on new stocks in $\frac{1}{2}$, & $\frac{3}{4}$ Sizes. We have no $\frac{3}{4}$ sizes left and cannot obtain a delivery date. We have to laugh at a competitor, who has recently mail shotted their customers with the boast that they are the Exclusive Seller of these instruments. Funny, when we are on our 3rd Container of them, and they have been on our website and Mail Order Catalogue since 2006. It is also a shame that the picture they used was of a *Piacenza!*, and contrary to what they have printed, they have never been available as $\frac{1}{4}$ & $\frac{1}{8}$ sizes. Beware of Amateurs is all we can say! However instruments are now £85, set-up ready to tune & play and are still amazing value for money, and well below the R.R.P. let alone for a professionally setup instrument. They are manufactured of the correct tonewoods, with ebony fittings, a Brazilwood bow, and a lovely rectangular case, with blanket & padded ruckstraps. Realistically they would benefit from, say, a set of Dominants at the special low price of £30, to allow them to give of their best. Therefore for £115 you would be purchasing an instrument that realistically 10 years ago we would have been asking at least £150 for. Still a Bargain!

The Hidersine Piacenza, available as a Full Size Violin, 15½” & 16” Viola and a Full size cello is still proving very popular, and is exceptional value for money. Mostly we have upgraded the Violas and Cellos beyond the initial specifications, as the strings supplied in particular, are not good enough. Therefore please ask for a price on these. The Piacenza is a superb instrument, but it does need playing in, maybe more than some instruments. However once played in, say after a month or so, it really does shine against the competition. The Violin & Viola come with a rectangular case, with ruck straps, and the cello with a padded cover. All come with a superior brazilwood bow, with ebony frog and parisienne eye.

We are of course also stocking the new Hidersine Veracini Outfit, see website, at a price much lower than others are charging for this lovely antiqued instrument. We are only selling this as a fully set-up instrument, strung with Thomastik Dominants, so at the price of £390 you are really getting a bargain, in some cases more than £200 less than the competition. The case and bow that accompany this violin, are of a good quality, as befits this superb package.

For those purchasing instruments from us, our `Up-Grade` policy to individual players remains as always, that we guarantee to purchase back any instrument/outfit purchased from us at the price that you paid us (less the V.A.T. which the Government had anyway), when you upgrade to a better instrument/outfit, providing the instrument you return is in a good re-sellable condition. (This price does not cover any upgrades like different strings, as we would automatically replace the strings on return anyway).

On the subject of better strings, may we respectfully suggest that when purchasing an instrument/outfit, that unless it is fitted with good strings as part of its specification, you maybe consider asking us to upgrade it with a set of good strings? This can lift even the most basic of instruments to a different level and produce a much more mellow tone than the factory supplied strings. We don't charge for the fitment, just the cost of the strings and we even let you have the factory strings as a spare set! I can tell you that it makes the playing experience much better, and especially for the parent, the listening experience more tolerable!

Please enquire for any special offers. No goods offered will be seconds, or in anyway imperfect, but sometimes end of lines, or cases we have purchased as an extra to obtain some additional discount that may be offered with their purchase.

As always we are happy to welcome you to our shop, in particular to select an instrument or bow from our magnificent selection. Due to space limitations we do ask that you make an appointment prior to visiting. This will also ensure that we can devote our time to you and assist you in your selection. Any instrument or bow(s) selected can then be either purchased at the time or taken on approval for a short period. Bows can be returned by post, but not instruments, which must be returned by hand. Whilst we don't open on Saturday's, as a matter of course, we can often open by appointment. If a Saturday is the only day you can make, we will try to accommodate you.

I am sorry for any repetition in this issue of our Newsletter, but we have to assume that to some, this is the first issue they have seen. If you are interested in our previous newsletters, please go to the website, where some of them are posted.

Anyway I hope that you have enjoyed this Newsletter, which contains our perspective of the Violin industry. The opinions expressed are ours, based upon our many years experience in this especial sector of the Music Industry. No part of this can be copied or reproduced without the authors expressed consent, except as stated earlier. Well that is the legal bit over!!!

Not quite of course we have to end with Errors & Omissions Excepted, however maybe some errors are deliberately there to stimulate you to contact us and give some feedback!

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