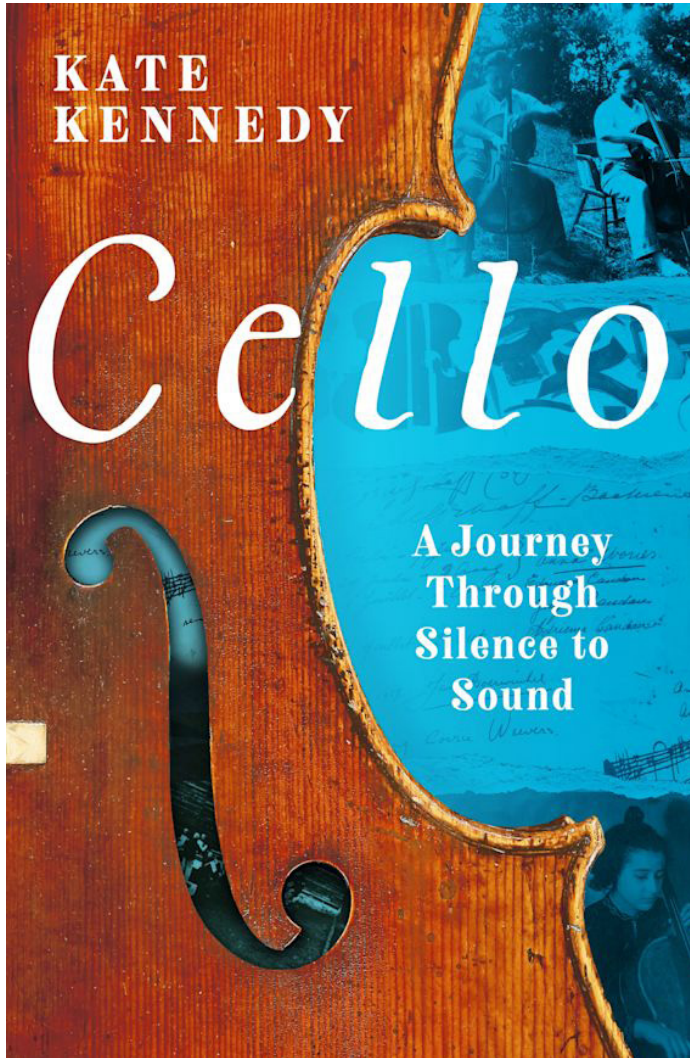


Through Silence to Sound

From a concept designed by Kate Kennedy and Tom Morris



Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Solo Suite for Cello
J.S. Bach, Cello Suite no. 2 in D minor

The music

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Cello Suite no2 in D minor BWV1008
I Prelude ~ II Allemande

Cheryl Frances-Hoad
(b1980)

Solo Suite for Cello
I The 'Mara' Cello

Bach

III Courante

Frances-Hoad

II The 'Bee' Cello

Bach

IV Sarabande

Frances-Hoad

III The Gagliano Cello

Bach

V Menuet I and II
VI Gigue

Frances-Hoad

IV The 'Open-String' Cello

Through Silence to Sound is a performance for cello and spoken word, weaving together words by author and broadcaster Kate Kennedy, Bach's *Cello Suite no2*, and specially composed music by Cheryl Frances-Hoad. Based on Kate's internationally acclaimed book *Cello – A Journey Through Silence to Sound* (2024), the performance is a love song to the cello, celebrating and investigating a player's intense and personal relationship to their instrument.

Kate's own relationship with the cello is a complicated one. As a teenager, she suffered an injury to her arm that imposed severe limitations on her career as a performer on the instrument that was her first love. She realised that, in order to start to understand what the cello meant to her, she needed to find out what the cello – and, crucially, the absence of the cello – had meant to some other cellists, past and present.

Kate now describes the background to her book in more detail.

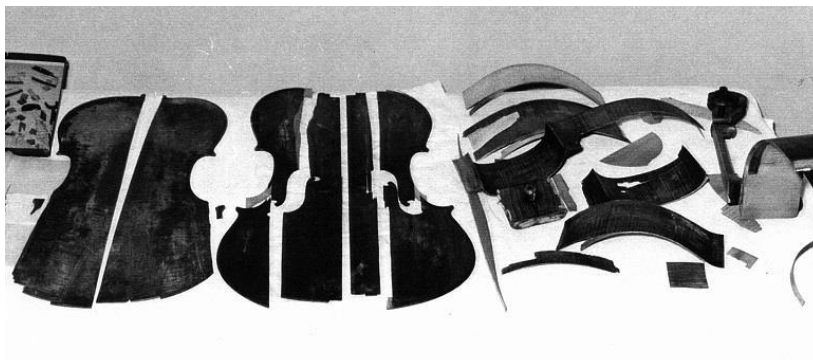
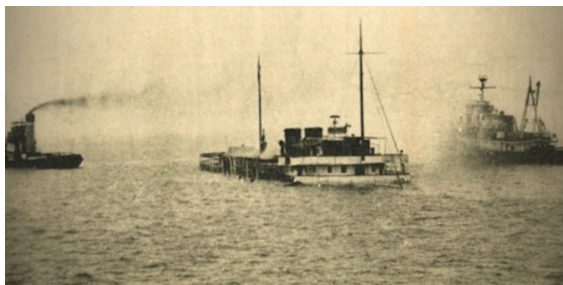
The catalyst for this book was a photo-shoot. I was shifted about, asked to turn, fold my arms, smile, look serious. It was rather fun, a bit exposing, a bit awkward. After a while the photographer suggested I get my cello and see what images of playing might look like through the camera. I remonstrated – after a career-limiting arm injury, I didn't see myself primarily as a cellist any more. But, in the face of his enthusiasm, I fetched it and sat in front of the blank screen, improvising and playing snatches of Bach. The photographer became much more animated, snapping away. 'This is it!' he said. 'Perfect.' In that moment, observed, the lens pointing at both my instrument and me, I began to understand something I had only half sensed until then. Away from my cello, my shadow was missing. Without it I felt exposed, my silhouette incomplete. But with my instrument I was protected, and entirely happy within my own skin. During that photo-shoot I realized that I needed to find out what the cello, and its absence, had meant to other cellists, in order to start to understand what it meant to me.

And so began a journey across Europe, a journey in and out of silence and music to uncover the stories of cellists and their instruments. Western classical music is a history of harmonies and sounds that speak to each other across the centuries. It is also a history of absences, of gaps. I found myself drawn to those gaps, to the silences where a player, or an instrument should have been. As I pieced together my own fractured relationship with my instrument, I found ways of filling those silences with music; through the telling of the story, or bearing witness to others' suffering, often far greater than my own. I found stories of fragmentation and erasure, but also of resurrection and resilience. And I learnt to fall back in love with the instrument that has always been my soul, and has shaped me, however complicated our partnership.

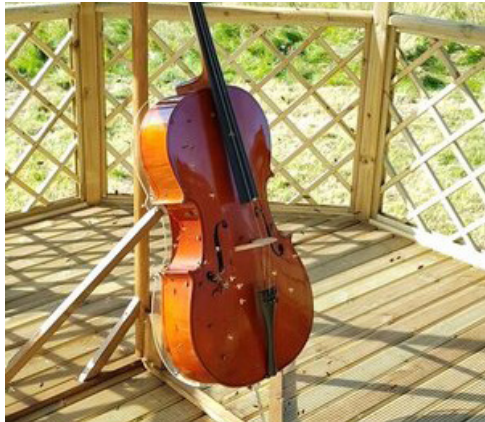
With my own cello as my travelling companion, we drew around us a community of players, both historic and contemporary. Often through the common language of Bach's solo cello suites, I found new ways of looking and listening to the instrument, and exploring it in every way. Particular cellists and cellos became important to me, four of which have provided the inspiration for Cheryl Frances-Hoad, herself a cellist, to write her *Suite for Solo Cello*.

Cheryl: 'I was delighted when Kate asked me to compose a new work inspired by her new book: a lapsed cellist myself, the contents held many resonances for me. My suite has four movements, each very intuitively inspired by the four stories overleaf.'

- I. I followed the adventures of the Stradivari cello of 1711 known as the '**Mara**'. Amedeo Baldovino (1916–1998), the cellist in the Trieste Piano Trio, was the owner of the '**Mara**' during the 1960s. On tour between Buenos Aires and Uruguay, the trio and their instruments were involved in a shipwreck. Forced to jump into the water, the trio survived, but their instruments were washed away.



- II. The '**Bee Cello**': in Nottingham, I encountered a cello that had been turned into a bee hive, its hollow cavity filled with bees and honeycomb. It is the inspiration of physicist and bee-keeper Martin Bencsik.



III. Pál Hermann (1902–1944) was a Jewish cellist and composer who was celebrated in his lifetime as the next Pablo Casals, but after being hounded across Europe, was taken to Drancy internment camp in Paris, then murdered by the Nazis, probably at Fort IV, the ‘Fort of Death’, on the outskirts of Kaunas, Lithuania. When he was arrested, his cello (made by Nicolò **Gagliano** (c.1730–1787)) was rescued, but has subsequently been lost. It is all that is left of this once brilliant young man, apart from his manuscripts, which have only very recently been edited and performed. After looking all over Europe for his cello, I learnt that the cello bore an inscription, that I hoped would some day enable me to trace it. ‘Ego Anima Musicae Sum’: I am the soul of music. Hermann is on the right below.



IV. The Open-String Cello was a project to take the fragments of broken old instruments and create new cellos for young players who need them. Working with the luthiers W. E. Hill & Sons we created a new design of instrument that can be made from flat pack by teenagers in a youth orchestra in a deprived area of Uruguay, not far from the 'Mara's shipwreck 60 years before. These instruments will have new stories, new partnerships, and offer players from deprived backgrounds a better future.



Kate Kennedy (author)

Writer, broadcaster and cellist Kate Kennedy studied at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music. She has played with period instrument ensembles throughout the UK, and published widely on twentieth-century words and music. Her books include: *Literary Britten*, *The Silent Morning – Culture and the Armistice 1918*, and edited with Dame Hermione Lee, *Lives of Houses*. Her biography *Dweller in Shadows – A Life of Ivor Gurney* was published in 2021, and *Cello – A Journey Through Silence to Sound* was published in the UK and US in August 2024, was Book of the Year on NBC Radio, and shortlisted for the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize 2025. Kate is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and a Research Fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford. She is the Director of the Oxford Centre for Life-writing, and a regular presence on BBC Radio 3.

Cara Berridge (cello)

Cara is a passionate chamber musician, founder member of the Sacconi Quartet, cellist in London Bridge Piano Trio and Ensemble Perpetuo. Sacconi Quartet have won prizes at many International competitions and have performed extensively throughout the UK and Europe. The Sacconi Quartet was formed in 2001 and has their own Chamber Music Festival in Folkestone which includes collaborations with many outstanding musicians, commissions of new music and outreach projects. Cara has recorded an extensive repertoire with Sacconi Quartet from Haydn to the present day including many commissions. In addition to her chamber music, Cara enjoys teaching, performing duo repertoire and recording music for film and TV. Like Pál Hermann, Cara plays a Nicolo Gagliano cello from 1781, generously on loan to her from the Royal Society of Musicians, a charity which helps musicians impacted by physical or mental ill health.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad (composer)

“What a sound. Frances-Hoad drenched each phrase in dramatic expression – wonderment and horror, principally – of the most ravishing intensity.”

Matthew Wright, *The Arts Desk*

Admired for her originality, fluency and professionalism, Cheryl Frances-Hoad has been composing to commission since she was 15. Classical tradition (she trained as a cellist and pianist at the Menuhin School before going on to Cambridge and King's College, London) along with diverse contemporary inspirations including literature, painting and dance, have contributed to a creative presence provocatively her own. “Intricate in argument, sometimes impassioned, sometimes mercurial, always compelling in its authority” (Robin Holloway, *The Spectator*), her output - widely premiered, broadcast and commercially recorded, reaching audiences from the Proms to outreach workshops - addresses all genres from opera, ballet and concerto to song, chamber and solo music.

Suite for Solo Cello was commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society with support from an anonymous donor.