THE CELLO BOW HELD THE VIOL-WAY; ONCE COMMON, BUT NOW ALMOST FORGOTTEN

Mark Smith

Ample evidence can be found to show that many early cellists, including some of the most distinguished, held the bow with the hand under. It seems likely that hand-under bow-holds were more common than hand-over bow-holds for cellists (at least outside of France) until about 1730, and it is certain that some important solo cellists used a hand-under bow-hold not only until 1730, but well into the second-half of the eighteenth century. Therefore, a significant part of the early cello repertory (perhaps some of it well-known today) must have been first played with the hand under the bow. Until now, hand-under bow-holds have been discussed only superficially by historians of the cello. With more information, I hope that some cellists may try such a bow-hold in the compositions which were or may have been originally played that way.

Iconographic evidence

Little written information about any aspect of cello technique is known earlier than the oldest dated cello method, that of Corrette in 1741. However, there are hundreds of pictures of cellists earlier than 1741, and these provide the bulk of information about bow-holds up to that time (see Table 1). I have studied 259 paintings, drawings, engravings and other works of art depicting cellists, from the earliest-known example, dating from about 1535, up to 1800.

The number of depictions is probably too small to give an accurate estimation of the actual number and distribution of cellists using the two bow-holds. Furthermore, one cannot take all of the statistics at face value. For example, the twenty-seven eighteenth-century German and Austrian depictions of hand-under cellists include seven angelic church decorations and four romantic porcelain.

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1. One of the few who has promoted this bow-hold on the cello was Marco Pallis, who in 1978 pointed out that for a long time the Baroque cello was bowed like the bass viol, and he urged players to give careful consideration to its use (‘The rebirth of early music’ Early Music, 6/1 (1978), 45).
2. M. Corrette, Methode ... pour apprendre ... le violoncelle (Paris, 1741/Geneva, 1980).
3. The core of this study is in my doctoral thesis ‘Certain aspects of Baroque music for the violoncello as finally exemplified in the suites for unaccompanied violoncello by Johann Sebastian Bach’ (unpublished Ph.D., Flinders University of South Australia, 1983). I have used the term ‘violoncello’ (or ‘cello’) in a broad sense, to include instruments of three, four or five strings, and in size from a body-length of about 60 cm to one of about 78 cm. (The usual body-length today is about 75 cm). The proportion of hand-over to hand-under bow-holds (as shown in the pictures) is about the same for all types of cello.
figures; it is likely that these angels and romantic figures follow fashions in painting and modelling, and do not necessarily show the current fashions in cello-playing. The large number of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish pictures is partly due to the fact that this prosperous area supported many artists. Musicians were a popular subject and painters may have liked the cello’s shape. It is also possible that the instrument was symbolic. Therefore, we cannot presume from Table 1 that there were a large number of Dutch and Flemish cellists. The paucity of British pictures of cellists before 1700 may be partly due to the cello being less popular in England at this time. Another aspect which these statistics do not show, is that only French cellists who are either clowns, street-musicians, actors, or treated in a satirical manner are shown with the hand under the bow, whereas all the apparently professional French cellists have the hand over the bow. Italian, German and English cellists are shown using both bow-holds for all types of music. Accompanying a singer is almost the only role shown for the cello (usually played hand-under) in the Flemish and Dutch pictures, either in allegorical bacchanals (Flemish), or in village weddings or by a burgher at home (Dutch). In their own special category are four Italians who hold their cello horizontally. In this position a cello is almost impossible to play with the hand under the bow; therefore the player has no choice but to have the hand over the bow. Notwithstanding anomalies such as those listed above, there is such a strong preference shown in the pictures of non-French cellists for hand-under bow-holds before the year 1730 (101 under, compared to twenty-five over), that one can conclude that there were actually more non-
French cellists using hand-under bow-holds than hand-over bow-holds before 1730.4

The many realistic seventeenth-century Dutch pictures can be relied upon to show clearly and accurately how some cellists held the cello and bow;5 even if it is unclear how much these pictures reflect the actual use of cellos (see Plate 1). Some other illustrations depict an identified place and event, and therefore can be used to provide documentary evidence. One example is a painting by D. Heins of a musical party at Melton Constable (Norfolk, England) in 1734,6 which shows [49]

Plate 1 Cornelis Saftleven (Rotterdam, 1607-1681), Young man playing on a cello, 1636. Chalk drawing. The Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.

the cellist with a bow-hold (carefully painted) like the almost Simandl-hold of the double-bass player standing next to him. Another example, is a painting by Martin van Meytens and his workshop, of the wedding festivities of Joseph II of Austria and Princess Isabella of Prima in 1760.7 This painting appears to be a careful and accurate record, and shows the continuo-cellist (very likely a member of the [50] Viennese Court Chapel) with his hand under the bow. Some other pictures seem to be documentary, even though the precise place and event are not known. For example, in a series of paintings by Marco Ricci of Italian opera in an English house between 1708 and 1711, three show a continuo-cellist (perhaps Italian) with the hand under the bow.8 While these Ricci paintings are sketchy, they give the impression that they are true to life.

Also important are those pictures in which the identity of the cellist is known, for example pictures of Pietro Salvetti in 1684-87, Pietro Sterlitchi in the first half of the eighteenth century, Cardinal Johann Theodor of Bavaria in 1753, Tonelli c. 1760, Antonio Vandini c. 1770, and Donald Gow in 1780. Salvetti is portrayed in a painting of musicians from the Medici Court in Florence by Antonio Domenico Gabbiani.9 John Walter Hill, who identified Salvetti, demonstrated that he was a very capable and highly-regarded musician.10 Gabbiani painted the cellist’s bow-hold carefully and clearly, and although the musicians are obviously posing for the painter, the cellist’s bow is in a playing position (see Plate 2). Sterlitchi is shown in a caricature by Pierleone Ghezzi.11 While caricatures are not usually expected to provide reliable information, Pierluigi Petrobelli has shown, from the

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4 Among street and folk cellists, the viol bow-hold has never completely died out, as witnessed by pictures (including more recently, photographs).
5 For example, a painting by Jan Miense Molenaer, in Richard D. Leppert, ‘Concert in a house: Musical iconography and musical thought’, Early Music, 7/1 (1979), 14.
8 Reproduced in Early Music, 14/3 (1986), 325, 327 and 328 (illustration nos. 3, 4 and 5).
9 Reproduced in Early Music, 18/4 (1990), 545.
11 Reproduced in Early Music, 21/1 (‘1993), 135.
copious annotations that sometimes accompanied Ghezzi’s caricatures, that Ghezzi was a reliable observer; according to Ghezzi, Sterlichi was a good cellist. The Cardinal Johann Theodor is shown in a small orchestra in the Seraing Palace in Liege, in a painting by Paul Joseph Delcloche. Delcloche probably took some artistic license.

Plate 2 Drawing taken from a painting by A.D. Gabbiani, (1652-1726), ‘Portrait of the Musicians of the Medici Court in Florence’ 1684-7 (Florence, Pitti Palace, No. 2805) The cellist is probably Pietro Salvetti.

[51] with the positioning of the musicians, making the cellist appear to be a soloist, whereas the Cardinal was perhaps merely a player of a bass-part. However, one would also expect, because of the high status of the Cardinal, that Delcloche gave him the correct bow-hold. Tonelli and Vandini, both of whom were celebrated as soloists and continuo-players, are shown late in life (or even post-mortem) in rather imprecise engravings, and Gow is shown accompanying a Scottish highland dance.

Written evidence
In the preface to his Florilegium Secundum of 1698, Georg Muffat wrote that French players of the ‘Bass’ (i.e. probably the basse de violon, particularly of a large size) held the bow the same way as French violinists, whereas Italian gambists and other bass-players (presumably including cellists) placed their fingers between the hair and the wood of the bow.

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12 Pieduigi Petrobelli, ‘Violin techniques in Rome during the first half of the 18th century as documented by the caricatures of Pierleone Ghezzi’ in Jakob Stainer and seine Zeit, ed. Walter Salmen (Innsbruck, 1984)
13 Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, no. R 7158, reproduced in H. Besseler and W. Bachmann, Musikgeschichte in Bildern - Konzert (Leipzig, 1971), pl. 7
14 Both are reproduced in E. Van der Straeten, The history of the violoncello (London, 1914), Tonelli on p. 146, and Vandini on p. 162.
(presumably with the palm facing upwards, and with the fingers not touching the hairs). In the Swedish Musikalske elenrenter of 1744, D. Berlin described a violin-type bow-hold for cellists, but he also stated that not all held the bow the same way. Charles Burney, in his account of his visit to Padua in 1770, wrote ‘It is remarkable that Antonio [Vandini] and all the other violoncello players here hold the bow in the old-fashioned way, with the hand under it. Burney also wrote that it was said that Vandini ‘plays and expresses “a pallare”, that is in such a manner as to make his cello speak’.

In 1720-21 Vandini had been cello-master at the Pieta in Venice where Vivaldi was employed. Vandini was known as a fine soloist, and he was the cello-accompanist of Tartini from at least 1723 to 1768. Burney also described a concert in Berlin in 1772, in which ‘M. Grauel, a violoncello performer in the King’s band, played a concerto; it was but ordinary music; however, it was well executed, though in the old manner, with the hand under the bow’. Burney’s comments ‘in the old manner’ and earlier, ‘the old-fashioned way’ (not just an old manner or way) imply that the hand-under bow-hold had once been the normal way, not just an option.

In 1799 an anonymous article was published in Leipzig about the cellist Johann Georg Christoph Schetky. It is an evocative portrait of Schetky, and gives a detailed description of his hand-under bow-hold, complete with some (now quaint) scientific explanations:

Schetky war einer der vorzüglichsten Virtuosen, die ich je auf dem herrlichen Violoncell gehörth habe. Sein Ton war der Ton der Oboe, wens er wie ein Luftseegler in den Regionen der Hohe herumkreutzte; und wenn er in der Tiefe deherbraufste, glaubte man den schönsten Contrebass zu hören. Er hatte den Bogen auf das vollkommenste in seiner Gewalt, um solche Stärke and Geschmeidigkeit damit abzuwägen. Zum bewundern war es, dass er die feinste Zartheit des Tons eben sowohl, als die höchste Kraft hervorbrachte, da seine Haltung des Bogens von der, aller Violoncellisten, die ich je gehört habe, verschieden war, and worüber andere Virtuosen, die sich auf diesem Instrumente mit ihm zu messen wagten, (es gab deren wenige) erstaunten. Es wind mir schwer fallen, these Haltung des Bogens begreiflich zu machen. Gewohnlich wird der [52] Bogen mit dem Daumen unter, and mit vier Fingern über dem Holz geführt, wie bey der Violin, nur class bey dem Violoncello der Arm herabhängt and der Bogenstricht unterwärts geht, anstatt dass bey der Geige der Arm gekrümm, die Hand erhoben and der Bogen aufwärts gerichtet seyn muss. Bey Schetky war das anders. Der Daumen lag auf dem Frosch des Bogens, der Zeigefinger allein

19 Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, no. 3 (Leipzig, 1799/Amsterdam, 1964), columns 33-37. I am indebted to Anja Schoene for her help in translating this quotation.

Schetky machte mit dieser Bogenhaltung Staccato, vorwärts and rückwärts, zog dagegen im Adagio den Ton aus seinem Instrumente, wie man das süsse Oehl aus der reifen Olive presst, and im Allegro gieng es mit einer Fertigkeit über die Saiten hinweg, dass man zehn Augen nöthig gehabt hätte, um sein Viprato zu bemerken, ob man gleich nur ein Ohr dazu bedurfte.

Im Accompagnement zum Recitativ war these Bogenhaltung in ihre vollen Kraft. Die Pflicht des Violoncellisten ist im Accompagnement des Recitatives die Hauptnote in der Höhe arizugeben, abet den Akkord mit dem Grundton zugleich hören zu lassen. Mit diesem Anne hat die verstorbene Gambe dem Violoncello ein Legat vermacht. Der Violoncellist, welcher im Recitativ nur die Bassnoten herunterstreicht, versteht die Pflicht seines Instrumentes nicht, oder ist höchstens ein Fiedler, dem der Generalbass terra incognita ist. Sänger and Sängerinnen, die auf dem klippenvollen Meere des Recitatives ängstlich heben umwogen, wurden durch sein Accompagnement vor dem Stranden gesichert.

Sein Ton war nicht nur voll, durchdringend and schneidend, sondern auch schmeichelnd, and seine Fertigkeit entsprach dem Uebrigen. Ich war oft Zeuge, class bey Quartetten, die wir in unserm freundschaftlichen Zirkel neu erhielten, etwan die erste Violonstimme fehle, and Schetky she prima vista von seinem Violoncell herunterspielte, als hätte er die Geige in der Hand. Schwierigkeiten in der Höhe and Tiefe wuste er mit der reinsten Intonation hervorzubringen, und, wo sein Daumen hinflieg, da sass er auch wie der gute Reiter im Sattel. Seine Applikatur wechselte mit der gewöhnlichen Daumenapplikatur and der Applikatur der Violine ab, daher fallen die, für seine eigene Hand gesetzten Kompositionen, dem gewohnhchen Violoncellisten auferst schwer.

Schetky was one of the most superior virtuosi whom I have ever heard on the glorious violoncello. His tone was that of an oboe when he traversed the high regions like a swallow, and when he boomed in the depths, one could believe one was hearing the finest double-bass. He had the most accomplished control of the bow, with which he could balance such strength and flexibility. It was a marvel how he could produce equally well the finest sweetness and the greatest strength of tone, because his holding of the bow was different from all the violoncellists that I have ever heard, and about which other virtuosi who ventured to match him on this instrument (there were few of them) were amazed. It will be difficult for me to make others understand this method of holding the bow. Usually the bow is held with the
thumb under, and with the four fingers directed over the stick, as with the violin, only that with the violoncello the arm hangs downwards, and the bow-strokes are directed downwards, whereas with the violin, [53] the arm is bent, the hand is raised, and the bow must be directed upwards. With Schetky it was otherwise. The thumb lay on the frog of the bow, the index-finger was alone on the stick; and the three other fingers were down on the hairs. Through the pressure of the lower fingers, especially the little finger, he conspicuously increased or decreased the pressure of the bow, and brought forth by this means the greatest power of the depths, or the sweetest oboe-tone in the upper regions. This method is right from mechanical and physical grounds. By this means the player has the action of the bow rather more under his control, because [when] playing with the bow directed downwards, anyway, the strength is taken away from the hand because of the lowered arm, whereas [the strength] is released by the bent arm turned upwards. In the first case, the blood flows more in the part of the arm directed downwards, and interrupts the strength of the muscles because of the swelling up of the arm. [1] With the violin, it works the other way. The blood flows back because the arm is raised and therefore lets the muscles have their freedom. However, much practise is needed for this bow-hold, which I would recommend nevertheless to beginners on the violoncello, for the reasons presented above.

With this bow-hold Schetky could do staccato upbow and downbow [i.e. multiple upbows or multiple downbows], whereas in an Adagio he drew from his instrument a tone like the sweet oil one presses from a ripe olive, and in an Allegro the bow skipped over the strings with a dexterity such that one would have needed ten eyes to perceive it [a poignant allusion to Schetky’s blindness in one eye], while one would need only one ear to perceive his vibrato.

It was in the accompaniment to recitative that this bow-hold was shown to full advantage. The obligation of the violoncellist in the accompaniment of recitatives is to give the main note of the voice above, and at the same time to allow the chord to be heard together with the bass note. These duties are a legacy bequeathed to the violoncello by the defunct gamba. The violoncellist, who strokes only the bass notes in the recitative, does not understand the duty of this instrument, or is at most a fiddler to whom the generalbass is “terra incognita”. Schetky knew his duty. Singers male and female who were fearful because the recitatives were seas full of rocks, were saved from being shipwrecked by his accompaniment.

His tone was not only full, penetrating and cutting, but also flattering, and his dexterity [in the left hand?] matched all his other abilities. I often witnessed, that in quartets which we received as new compositions in our friendly circle, when the first violinist was missing, Schetky played “prima vista” [i.e. sight-read] on his violoncello, as though he had a violin in his hand. In difficult passages both in the high and low registers he produced the purest intonation, and, where his thumb [flew through the air and] landed, he sat there like a good rider in the saddle. His fingering varied between the usual thumb-fingering and the fingering of the violin, which is why those compositions which were set for his own hand are extremely difficult for the ordinary violoncellist.
One wonders if the extravagant praise of Schetky is exaggerated. However, confirmation of his high ability comes from the 1760s with the gift to him of a Stradivari cello, and from his many reported performances.

I have not found any eighteenth-century cello methods that even mention the hand-under bow-hold. However, this is not surprising if one considers that the earliest non-French methods did not appear until this bow-hold was no longer fashionable; the earliest English method (that of Crome) was published in about 1765, the oldest surviving German method (Baumgartner’s) is dated 1774 and was written in French, and none of the Italian methods has a text. Even Schetky [54] in his Some Observations on and Rules for VIOLONCELLO Playing (published about 1780 in London) makes no mention of his own hand-under bow-hold (see Plate 3).

Origins of the cello bow-holds

It is likely that most cellists who held the bow hand-under ultimately derived their bow-hold from that of the bass viol, either because the cello was introduced later than the bass viol, or because initially the bass viol had the higher artistic role. The establishment and dissemination of the bass member of the violin family seems to have occurred in a fragmentary fashion, and its technique generally lagged well behind that of the bass viol. Among the many early English references given by Peter Holman, there are far more of violins accompanied by a bass viol, than of violins accompanied by a bass violin, particularly until the middle of the seventeenth century. Therefore, although a bass violin was presumably included in the sets of violins that were introduced to England from 1540 onwards (the earliest clear reference to a bass violin in England is dated 1601), it seems likely that for a long time the bass violin was relatively rare in England, and did not enjoy as high a status as the bass viol or the violin.

An additional reason for cellists to have the hand under the bow, was that possibly until at least 1750 most bows did not have screws for the fine adjustment of hair-tension; being able to adjust the hair-tension with the fingers was an advantage on screw-less bows, not only for expressive purposes, but also to compensate easily if the hairs were not at their best operating tightness. A few cellists may have copied the hand-under bow-hold of double bass players, particularly if they shared a continuo-part (as in

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21 Van der Straeten, op. cit., 191.
22 R. Crome, The Compleat Tutor far the Violoncello (London, c. 1765).
24 J.G.C. Schetky, Twelve duetts for two Violoncellos, with some Observations and Rules for playing that Instrument, op. 7 (London, n.d.).
25 Peter Holman, Four and twenty fiddlers.- the violin at the English court, 1540-1690 (Oxford, 1993).
26 Holman quotes a mention (dated 1601) of a ‘Base violin’, op. cit., 141.
27 Ephraim Segerman gives evidence that bow-screws were not generally accepted until such a late date in two reports in the Quarterly of the Fellowship of Makers and Researchers of Historical Instruments (Oxford): ‘Renaissance and Baroque Bows’ (April 1982), 32-33, and ‘Early 18th Century Bows and Screws’ (April 1983), 50-51.
the Heins painting), and some cellists may have preferred a hand-under bow-hold because heavy sleeves (as worn by Salvetti and many others in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) were less in the way than with the hand over the bow.\textsuperscript{28}

As for the hand-over bow-hold on the cello, the most influential and long-lasting group of early players were probably the French royal players of the ‘basses de violon’. The royal ‘basse’ players probably held the bow this way under Lully in his ‘Les Petits Violons’ (who first performed in 1656), because Georg Muffat described uniform bow-holds between the French violin and ‘bass’ in the context of the Lullist tradition, and this is supported by pictures.\textsuperscript{29} It is possible that the royal ‘basse’ players placed the hand over the bow already well before Lully’s time. There is a picture showing cello-like instruments being played this way in entertainments presented by the Queen of France in 1573.\textsuperscript{30} The spreading influence of Lullist orchestral discipline between the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries probably encouraged cellists to hold the bow like the violinists. France produced some celebrated solo cellists and influential cello teachers, from Berteau in the 1730s, to the Duport brothers at the end of the century, and they probably played a major role in the eventual adoption of the hand-over bow-hold by most cellists in other countries.

\textsuperscript{28} I am indebted to Ben Poglisi for this suggestion.
\textsuperscript{29} One engraving, from a royal almanac of 1682, shows Louis XIV at a ball, probably in Versailles. This is reproduced in Robert Isherwood, \textit{Music in the Service of a King} (New York, 1973), 255.
\textsuperscript{30} The Valois tapestries “Catherine de’ Medici at a ball following the Ballet of the Provinces of France, 1573”, reproduced in Christopher Hogwood, \textit{Music at Court} (London, 1977), pl. 35.
Music

We can be sure that the cello music composed by Vandini, Tartini and Schetky was originally played with the hand under the bow; Vandini and Schetky played this way, and Vandini was Tartini’s cellist. One can reasonably assume (from the iconographical and written evidence) that much of the Baroque cello music not composed in France or in a French style, was also played this way. However, there is little to find in the music itself (even that of Vandini, Tartini and Schetky) which identifies it as music to be played with the hand under the bow. When there are rapid, unslurred notes between adjacent strings, and the lower notes are on the beat, it is still a common practice for cellists to play the lower notes with an up-bow, which reverses the order of up- and down-bows for the hand-over-bow cellist, but which is normal for a viol bow-hold.31 An abundance of notes in this formation may indicate (but not guarantee) that originally a viol bow-hold was used.

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31 A well-known example of this is the bass-part of the last variation of Corelli’s ‘La Folia’.
Plate 4b  Mark Smith playing in the same position as illustrated in Quantz’s 1752 publication.

The type of bow

While bows of all lengths are shown, and a medium length is the most common, far more long bows are shown in the pictures of hand-under-bow cellists than in the pictures of hand-over-bow cellists. If bows were long, they were probably heavy, and therefore perhaps suitable for playing long notes loudly, although the weight of the bow may have been less important than it is for a modern cellist, because more of the control is through the hairs rather than the stick, and also because the cello tended to be held more vertically. If the bow is held at its end (as it was by most hand-under-bow cellists), and it is concave, it needs to have a higher head so that the stick does not touch the string while playing. A tensioning-screw is not needed, but neither is it an impediment. Varying the tension of the hairs with the fingers (particularly when the hand is near the end of the bow) is much easier when there is no ferrule (a late-eighteenth century refinement), which as well as spreading the hairs, stopped the deflection of the hairs away from the frog. The heel of the bow is more comfortable to hold if it is rounded. Even today, while most violin bows have a sharp corner on the heel, most cello bows still have a rounded heel, which apparently is a legacy of the early cellists who held the bow with the hand around the heel, and this may be an indication that at the [58] time when the modern cello bow became standardised there were still some cellists who held the bow this way.
The typical cello hand-under bow-hold

Schetky’s bow-hold (so elaborately described in 1799) matches the bow-holds shown in many pictures of earlier cellists (for example, Salvetti). While Schetky’s style of music must have differed from that of Baroque hand-under-bow cellists, presumably at least some parts of the earlier playing-methods were passed on to him from one cellist to another. It is likely that Schetky held his cello the viol-way (gripped by the legs), because this was the most respected hold for the cello at that time, and his cello was probably very high and close to the body (it is reported that he hid his blind left eye behind the neck of the cello). In this position, his right arm could have been close to his body, which would have allowed him to exert considerable pressure with the bow on the strings.

The pictures show that most of the hand-under-bow cellists had the thumb on the frog (like Salvetti and Schetky), and occasionally the thumb is on top of the stick (as in Heins’s painting) so that it could help to press the bow onto the string. When there was a heel on the bow, most of the cellists had the palm of the hand around the heel (like Salvetti and Vandini, and possibly Schetky). Most of the hand-under-bow cellists are also shown with the fourth (little) and third fingers on the hairs (like Schetky), and sometimes with the second as well (like Salvetti and Sterlichi). Often, as shown markedly by Sterlichi, the fingers are pulling rather than pressing the hairs. The Cardinal Johann Theodor is shown with a French solo viol bow-hold identical to that of the gambist in the same picture, but only a few other cellists are shown with a viol bow-hold like this, or the almost similar hold described in England by Christopher Simpson, with the hand in from the frog, and with the tip of the second finger (sometimes with the third) pressing the hairs. Only a few hand-under-bow cellists are shown with no fingers on the hairs. (One of Ricci’s cellists is shown this way.)

A wide variety of bow-holds is also to be found in pictures of viol players, but it is useful to compare a typical underhand cello bow-hold with the solo French viol bow-hold, because this was clearly defined, used by an important group of players, and is well-known today. I have tried the varieties of bow-holds, and this has led me to some tentative conclusions. For example, the average cello hand-under bow-hold (as typified by Salvetti), must have allowed a greater pressure and vigour than that of the solo French viol bow-hold, and must have at least equalled that obtainable with the hand over the bow. One reason for this was that (as shown in the pictures) most hand-under-bow cellists had the hand near the end of the bow, even on long bows, which meant they would have used more of the weight of the bow. The typical hand-under-bow cellist also had a more substantial grip of the bow. With the fourth and third fingers pulling the hairs, the cellist would also have had a more secure hold of the hairs; and because a greater leverage [59] was possible by using almost the whole hand, there was probably a stronger control over the tension of the hairs, than with the second finger usual in French solo viol playing. In addition,

32 Van der Straeten, op. cit., 192.
the hairs can be tensioned more easily by the fingers in a hand-under bow-hold, than by the thumb in a hand-over bow-hold, again because the bow-hold is more secure, and because the hairs are tensioned and the bow is pressed to the string in the same movement of the hand. This sensitive, yet powerful control over the tension allows an exceptionally fine control over dynamics when the bow is moving slowly. For the French solo viol player, tensioning the hairs with the finger(s) was an important part of the technique, an integral part of the basic bow-stroke, and particularly important in producing the enflé (swell). If J.B. Forqueray could claim that the third finger tensioning the hairs was the ‘prime mover of expressive playing’ and ‘gives character to all music’ on the viol, perhaps this was how Vandini could make his cello ‘speak’.

When the hand was around the heel of the bow, the cellist had a bow-hold near to that which is still used today by German (and many other) double-bass players, and this was particularly true of the many cellists who held the cello very low, either resting it on the ground, on the left foot, or on a low stool or cushion (see Plate 4). (About two-thirds of my pictures up to 1730, and some as late as the mid-nineteenth century, show the cello in such a very low position, usually with the top of the cello well away from the player’s body. Salvetti’s and Vandini’s cellos are clearly near the ground, even though the bottom of their respective instruments is not visible.) With the cello low, the cellist’s bow-arm can hang very relaxed, and it is easy to play a fast alternation between non-adjacent strings heavily (not a rare occurrence in Baroque Italian cello music). Also, as with the German double-bass bow-hold, when the cellist has the hand around the heel of the bow, up-bows and down-bows are equally easy to emphasise. A disadvantage of holding the bow at its end, is that the bow is not as easy to lift off the string, and a disadvantage of having the fourth finger on the hairs, is that because the hand is at a different angle, the wrist is prevented from having the flexibility that it has with the solo French viol bow-hold.

The use of a viol bow-hold did not mean that cellos needed to sound like bass viols. On the contrary, not only were cellos intrinsically louder than gembas, but (as suggested by a study of the pictures) hand-under-bow cellists played typically in a heavier style. The use of a viol bow-hold also did not mean a restriction of technique or style. If the description of Schetky is a reliable guide, hand-underbow cellists could be just as versatile as the best hand-over-bow cellists. With Vandini accompanying Tartini for at least

34 This is quoted by John Hsu in ‘The use of the bow in French solo viol playing of the 17th and 18th centuries’, Early Music, 6/4 (1978), 527.
35 Richard Holmes has recreated a hand-over cello bow-hold in which the hairs are tensioned by the thumb, facilitating a portato-style of playing. See R. Holmes, ‘New Baroque bow grip for cellists’, The Strad (January, 1994), 35-37.
36 This is another part of cello history that has yet to take a proper account of iconographical evidence; while it is a widely-held belief that most Baroque cellists gripped the cello between the legs in a gamba-hold, this is contradicted by the evidence to be found in pictures. Of my assessable reproductions from 1535 to 1730, ninety-six cellos are on or very near the ground, only eight are held in a gamba-hold, and thirty-eight are held up by other means (such as a spike, stool, or rope); and for the period 1731-1800, the numbers are thirty-nine on or very near the ground, thirty-seven gamba-hold, and thirty-eight held up by other means.
forty-five years, one would expect that the playing-style of the hand-under-bow Vandini had much in common with that of the hand-over-bow Tartini. Therefore, it is possible that most hand-under-bow cellists sounded much like hand-over-bow cellists most of the time, and of course all the hand-under-bow cello music can be played very well today with the hand over the bow. However, it is inevitable that there would be a loss of some nuances that were distinctive not only of having the hand under the bow, but also of [60] tensioning the hairs with the fingers, of having the hand around the heel, and of holding the cello very low.

**Acknowledgements**

The iconographic part of this study would have been much smaller without the assistance of Uta Henning; to her I offer many thanks.