

# Matthew Hardie, EDINBURGH

CELLO 1795 (1818/1823)

The cellos of Matthew Hardie are considered by some as his greatest achievements – they were certainly highly regarded during his own life time, when a number of prominent Edinburgh musicians, including Nathaniel Gow, favoured his work. Throughout his career Hardie produced a variety of instruments based on a similar form, his model being distinguished by a square but elegant outline, with wide, flat curves in the upper and lower portions linked by a narrow waist. Also typical of Hardie’s model is the graceful narrow-hooked corners and the curled soundhole wings, which contribute towards a Venetian feel. Also common to Hardie’s cellos is a petite head, with tightly coiled oval volute opposite a distinctly tapered peg box, and high-cut throat. Additional characteristics are the elongated heel, narrow chamfers and the wide, rounded quadrant of the upper peg-box wall. It was during the 1790s that Hardie’s cello output appears to have been most concentrated. In 1795 he produced at least three superb instruments, two made from the same log of birds’-eye maple, the other being this handsome sycamore-backed example. It would appear that at that time Hardie had not yet acquired printed labels; instead the inscription simply reads ‘Matthew Hardie Edin. 1795’.

The arching is relatively high compared with Hardie’s later works, such as his cello of 1818, where the arching heights are 26 mm and 22 mm back and front. In general, the long arch in both plates is formed by a slow continuous curve. Unusually, the table is formed from four pieces of narrow-grained spruce, and perhaps made from stock originally intended for violin work. At the time this cello was made, Hardie was aged sixty-four, so it would be reasonable to assume that some of the work was delegated to assistants. Interestingly, details such as the long and elegant corners, the cut and flow of the sound holes and tight-coiled volutes compare with the John McGeorge cello of 1835. The plates are cleanly finished apart from occasional traces of toothed plane and scraper work around the edges.

The deep Venetian red-coloured varnish is typical and seen on Hardie’s instruments of the period, such as the viola of 1823. In that year we see Hardie’s fine cello (pp), which represents a return to the thin-textured golden varnish first seen three decades earlier. The instrument still retains its original 280 mm neck, which is attached with two screws through the block. Apart from being slightly wider across the middle, the outline is similar to earlier work described here. However, the rib height of 113 mm is considerably lower. Finally, this cello reveals a secret, that being the method Hardie used to mark the soundholes. Fine inked lines were drawn over a set of pinpricks, and remnants of the pricks remain visible on all Hardie’s instruments. However, for some reason, on this occasion, the fs were marked and then resited to a more outward position, leaving the original lines partially exposed.



## PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS (MM)

LENGTH OF BACK	755
UPPER BOUT WIDTH	350
MIDDLE BOUT WIDTH	229
LOWER BOUT WIDTH	436
STOP LENGTH	405

## RIB HEIGHTS

AT NECK	119.5
AT ENDPIN	119.5

## ARCHING HEIGHT

BACK	30.5
FRONT	29.5

## EDGE THICKNESSES

MAXIMUM	4.5
MINIMUM	4

## F-HOLES

OVERALL LENGTH	139
BETWEEN UPPER CIRCLES	90

## SCROLL

OVERALL LENGTH	198
MAXIMUM WIDTH	56

PURLING: *sycamore*

LININGS: *willow*

BLOCKS: *willow*