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Strings Editors' Top 10 New Products

10 noteworthy products from the past 12 months that can enhance a string player's experience

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By Erin Shrader

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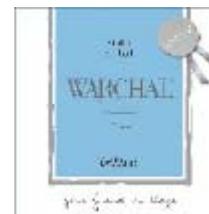
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A Brilliant Idea!

The name might not ring a bell. But father and son violinists Bohdan Warchal and Bohdan Warchal, Jr., makers of handmade strings, founded their family business just five years ago in Slovakia on the premise that “sound fascinates us.” Their newest strings, **Warchal Brilliant Vintage Violin Strings**, are a special adaptation of their Brilliant line for antique instruments. “Antique instruments often provide a specific kind of quality,” says Warchal, Jr., who coordinates research for the company. “They ‘play themselves.’ In other words, they don’t need to be forced. Such instruments require a bit different construction of the string and also a different tension. Thus, for the new line the construction and the tension of the strings were adapted to such instruments. We paid a lot of attention to adjust the tension very precisely.” The new strings performed very well on our test instrument, a fairly bright-sounding contemporary violin. The sound was focused, the response quick and exceptionally clear, especially on the E string. Yes, the timbre is on the brilliant side, at least on our contemporary violin, but also rich, and without the annoying surface noise typical of some synthetic-core strings. *Warchal Brilliant Vintage violin strings, \$59.95 (MSRP).* warchalstrings.com



Core Values from CodaBow

Traditional bows are not designed for today's extended-range instruments. Whether it's a five-string acoustic fiddle or a seven-string electric violin, the demands made by those additional strings are quite different from what is



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required of a traditional violin or viola bow. The **Joule**, from **CodaBow**, is an adaptation of the traditional violin bow, using 21st-century materials, designed especially to meet those requirements. Inside the woven carbon-fiber exterior of each CodaBow is an "acoustic core" composed of a blend of synthetic materials, such as Kevlar and aramid fibers, that determine many of the bow's unique characteristics. Though designed specifically for extended-range instruments, musicians have found that they draw a strong core sound out of standard instruments, as well, says CodaBow founder Jeff Van Fossen. "Most [of these bows] are going onto traditional violins," he says. For instance, the designers at CodaBow were able to engineer some of the additional stiffness and mass of a viola bow in order to draw a solid, core sound out of the low C without crushing the E. Other elements of the new design include the unique "swept back" shape of the frog, which offers a slightly longer hair length for more string control yet preserves the familiar balance and feel of a violin bow. *The Joule*, \$675 (MSRP). codabow.com



Everest—Improved

Based on feedback from customers, David Cheng has launched a Second Generation line of his popular, affordable shoulder rests and added a brand new model, the **Everest Collapsible Shoulder Rest (EC-4)**. The EC-4 sports a simple, sturdy folding mechanism that won't pinch fingers. The feet of all Everest models are now made of a softer, more flexible material for a better grip, and can be ordered in extra-tall. The foam pad and adhesive holding it have also been improved. The Second Generation 1/4–1/10 size (EZ-1A) rest has been redesigned to better fit the littlest instruments. As a limited-time introductory offer, the new collapsible rests will include a free black velvet storage pouch that can attach to the outside of cases. *Everest EC-4 Collapsible rest*, \$39.99 (MSRP); *Second Generation EZ shoulder rests in four sizes*, \$25.99–\$27.95 (MSRP) depending on size. olivermusic.com



No Water Worries

The Blue Oasis sound-hole humidifier has proved popular on the guitar market for awhile. Now there's an **Oasis Case Humidifier** for bowed strings. The Oasis is a blue tube made from a special fabric that allows water vapor (but not water) to pass through it. As the water evaporates, it creates a vacuum and the tube shrinks to compensate for the loss of water. There's no guessing about when to rehydrate: when it looks like an empty toothpaste tube, it's time. The included syringe makes it easy. Inside the tube, crystals of Humigel, a super absorbent polymer, absorb up to 500 times their weight in water and hold it in a gel matrix, making leaks even less likely. The Oasis attaches with tiny magnets to a small stainless steel strip that adheres to any flat surface inside the case. *Oasis Case Humidifier*, \$19.95 (MSRP), \$17.95 (street).



oasishumidifiers.com

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A New Classic Violin Case

The new **BAM Classic 3** is a stylish, compact violin case that rests somewhere between a contoured case and a half-moon in terms of size and shape. A single block of high-density foam, injected around a violin-shaped mold, and covered with a single piece of black fabric, forms the interior. Outside the foam is a corrugated structure filled with a shock-absorbing material. The cover is made of water-resistant cordura nylon in a choice of dark green, black, or navy blue with rubber feet, a subway handle, and D-rings for straps. The interior sports two bow holders and a detachable zipper compartment for small accessories. Two additional compartments, one on the front for a shoulder rest and an expandable pocket on the back for sheet music, are recessed into the mold and accessed from the exterior of the case. The sturdy six-pound case comes with two backpack straps. The Classic 3 is made entirely in Thailand, hence the relatively affordable list price. *Bam Classic 3*, \$230. bamcases.com



An Ultralight Cello Case

Looking for an ultralight cello case with strength, durability, and the ability to accommodate a seated cellist's posture needs? **Musilia's** new **carbon-fiber cello cases** were designed by a professional cellist from a family of cellists, and seem to have addressed all the familiar issues: weight, safety, nonstandard dimensions, ease of carrying, and even the irritating noise of rattling hardware. Starting with weight, the lightest model, MCC301, weighs just five pounds, thanks to the use of ultra-lightweight materials. The more affordable MCC201 weighs 6.3 pounds, while the hybrid carbon/fiberglass MCC101 weighs in at 7.7 pounds. The no-frills interior sports a unique suspension system that adjusts easily to fit any full- or near-full-sized instrument. A foam block at the upper end holds the cello button firmly in place with the neck suspended in air. A cross bar keeps the case rigid at the neck. The lower bouts are suspended on foam pads mounted on carbon-fiber springs, each adjustable by a two-way screw for a custom fit. The case holds two bows.

Latches, handles, and simplified strap hardware are all designed to reduce noise. A classy touch. Since so many accidents involve torn straps or the hardware used to secure them, Musilia has devised a system with a single nylon strap and simple plastic strap adjusters. Several smooth-edged strap-holder inserts are inset into the case to reduce snagging, and reinforced with layers of carbon fiber for strength. The strap can be rigged in various backpack or over-the-shoulder configurations to suit the player. It comes with high-quality shoulder pads and even a wedge-shaped back cushion

that detaches to turn a regular chair into a cellist's slanted seat.

Musilia carbon-fiber cello cases: MCC101, \$1,045; MCC201, \$1,655; MCC301, \$2,280. musilia.net

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