

Canterbury Christ Church University Viola Day with Martin Outram. 4 February 2017

On Saturday 4th February, a group of viola players of all ages and abilities gathered at Canterbury Christ Church University for a day of viola playing led by Martin Outram. The musicians were grade five and above standard, the youngest player aged 12 through to retired adults. The day began at 9:30am with everyone taking part in a viola ensemble, rehearsing and playing through several different pieces including an arrangement for four violas of Telemann's Viola Concerto in G major.

Students studying on the undergraduate music degree course at Canterbury Christ Church University had composed an array of new works. These were performed during the first concert of the day and featured Martin joined by other musicians in duos and trios. These contemporary works explored a wide range of extended techniques on the viola. There were some unusual combinations of instruments, including one piece for viola and two trumpets.

After the concert there was a masterclass, which enabled some of the viola players to perform to the rest of the group and get fantastic advice and tips from Martin to enhance their playing. There were four brave participants and Martin's feedback discussed various viola-related topics, from bow hold, to posture and bow distribution. Even those who did not play in the masterclass would have gained valuable knowledge from the insightful tips Martin gave.

The second concert of the day was performed by various chamber music groups from students within Canterbury Christ Church University. There was something for everyone: string trios, viola quintets, viola duos and a trio for clarinet, viola and piano. The day finished with rehearsing a new, especially-composed, four-movement piece with four viola parts, one violin and one cello.

The day was a huge success and was enjoyed by all who took part; everyone is already eagerly waiting for the next viola day! A huge thank you to Martin Outram for putting on this fantastic day, which was filled with wonderful music and explored many aspects of the viola.

Rebecca Tarrant

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