

Meeting Lawrence Power

On the 12th of February, I had the enormous pleasure of hearing and talking with Lawrence Power. After spending much of my student days pouring over his recordings, particularly his renditions of Der Schwanendreher and the Rubbra Concerto, it was a real treat to find that I would be playing in the Philharmonia Orchestra the day he performed the Walton Concerto.

To my dismay, the orchestra was reduced for the Concerto - but fortunately that meant I could sit in the Royal Festival Hall and listen to the run through/rehearsal (a rare treat for an orchestral musician, I thought!). The beginning of the first movement was slower than I had anticipated, not distorting the rhythm or pulse, nor being overly sentimental. Instead it was a controlled, continuous line to the second subject and then his steady pacing electrified the following section.

The second movement was a joyful display of his playing and the rich tone of his 1590 Brensi filled the hall, sounding effortless. You can hear him talk about his instrument and more with Philharmonia's principal bassoonist, Robin O'Neill, by accessing the Orchestra's Soundcloud profile where the pre-concert talk has been released as a podcast.

The break called for a coffee, and on a Saturday outside the South Bank Centre there is a food market with a veritable selection of delicious coffee vendors. On heading back we bumped into each other and Laurence talked with me a bit about the sound in the hall (if memory serves me correctly, Lawrence played the original orchestration of the piece without reduced winds, however this did not result in any balance issues). There was also time for a shameless 'selfie'.

To conclude, I found Lawrence to be a charming person who, as I'd always assumed, is able to work magic with the viola, and also look great in skinny jeans! What more do you need? Well you can see him perform at the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia again in a few months, this time playing Bartok.

Claire Newton