

Fitzroy Quartet!!

What we have been up to and our plans! All in the eyes of the violist of course...

This year has been a very busy and exciting one for us as a quartet! We started the year with many concerts in the diary, including our St Martin-in-the-Fields debut and our first performance at the Wigmore Hall as part of their masterclass series with András Keller. For our various concerts and engagements, we had to prepare Mendelssohn Op. 60 in F minor, Bartok Quartet No 3, Beethoven Op. 18 No 3, Wolf 'Italian Serenade', Schumann Piano Quintet and a selection of British songs by Quilter and Britten to name a few. In order for us to prepare this music and keep up our personal practice and engagements we planned to rehearse six times a week, sometimes seven, for around three hours, depending on the month we had ahead.

There were a couple of months where we had concerts every week, with different repertoire in each; in this case we would often schedule two sessions per day and practise the different programme accordingly. Although this may seem a lot, we cannot get through a rehearsal without our favourite sweets (Percy Pigs), multiple cups of tea and the occasional jam session. I was late to a rehearsal a couple of months ago and walked in to the boys singing a song about 'being late', complete with rhyming vocals, piano and violin accompaniment. Thankfully this doesn't happen too often and our rehearsals are very productive!

We have really enjoyed travelling the country together, having weekends away and meeting lots of wonderful people. A highlight for us was in January this year when we were invited to perform at the Lodz Academy of Music in Poland, our programme was Haydn Op. 77 No 1, Bartok Quartet No 3 and Beethoven Op. 135. We were so excited to go at Christmas as it was covered in snow, which is something we rarely experience here in London. When we arrived we met with the promoter who showed us to our accommodation and to the concert hall, then we were free for the evening. The promoter had recommend an authentic polish restaurant for us to try for dinner, we were all so hungry and looking forward to trying their food. We each ordered a schnitzel, but little did we realise it would be literally the size of an A3 sheet of paper! The whole meal was so cheap in comparison to London, it worked out to be around £3 each! Amazing! We had a wonderful concert, and enjoyed performing to a full house, we very much hope to return next year.

In May this year, we were chosen to represent the Royal Academy as their quartet in the Cavatina Intercollege Competition. The set work was Beethoven Op.18 No 3 and it was to be adjudicated by Richard Morrison who writes reviews for The Times. We had already performed the Beethoven in St Peter's, Eaton Square - we perform at this beautiful church throughout the year as their Prize Winners for 15/16. We were extremely focused on the competition, especially as it is run by the Cavatina Trust, and spent many hours studying with our tutor Garfield Jackson, whom we see at least once a month. As well as our lessons with Garfield we received coaching from Levon Chillingirian, David Strange, Oliver Wille, and the Doric Quartet on this piece alone. We were delighted to receive joint first prize in the competition along with the Isbilja Quartet from Trinity.

Below: the Fitzroy quartet after the Cavatina Competition with the chairman of the Trust and Richard Morrison from The Times



Mike (cello), Stefano (Violin I) and I finish our Masters Degree at the Royal Academy in July. Until then we have a few recitals, including a performance of Mendelssohn's Octet with the Brodsky Quartet in Petworth Festival, and will use the summer to start preparing our new programme. We are attending a course in July at Lake Garda, Italy, to study with Iris Juda, whom we recently saw perform with the Hagen Quartet at the Wigmore Hall. The Hagen Quartet is one of our favourite quartets!

We are looking forward to continuing our studies as a quartet next year and are delighted to be studying with Oliver Wille in Birmingham. We shall travel from London around three times per term to work intensively with Oliver; some of our new programme includes Beethoven Op. 95, Mozart K.589, and the Debussy Quartet. Also we have commissioned a friend of ours to write a six minute work, which we hope to have by the start of 2017. Alongside our studies with Oliver we are extremely excited to be returning to the Royal Academy as the Chamber Music Fellows for 16/17! We are very much looking forward to starting our career as a professional string quartet and are excited for the future and what lies ahead.

Emily Pond
30 May 2016

Biography

Emily Pond studies with Martin Outram at the Royal Academy of Music and graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music with a First Class BMus(Hons) degree. Emily's main passion lies in string quartet playing, being violist of The Fitzroy Quartet. The quartet are the resident quartet at St Peters, Eaton Square, as their prize winners of 2015, and also won the Wolfe Wolfinssohn String Quartet Competition. They recently gave their Wigmore Hall and St Martin-in-the-Fields debut and regularly perform across Europe and the U.K.

As a soloist Emily won the 2014 RNCM Viola Competition and has taken part in masterclasses with violists Garth Knox, Atar Arad, Thomas Riebl and Nobuko Imai. She has also performed in the BBC Proms, Aldeborough Music and Edinbrugh Fringe Music Festivals. Emily was also invited to be an 'Artist in Residence' in the Cantiere International d'Arte di Montepulciano (Italy) in 2013/2014 where she gave recitals with leading musicians from across Europe.

As an orchestral musician Emily is a member of the Royal Academy Sainsbury Soloists, and has led many of the Royal Academy Orchestras and has appeared with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and BBC Philharmonic Orchestras, The Northern Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia Cymru and also the European Union Youth Orchestra working under renown conductors Semyon Bychkov, Vasily Petrenko, Marin Alsop, Sir Mark Elder, Trevor Pinnock and Edward Gardner and soloists Maxim Vengerov and Stephen Hough.