

## News from Janet Pazio - April 2017

Exciting news for Stoke-on-Trent. Apparently the Halle are considering opening up a free music school for primary and secondary children along the lines of an academy. I've heard that Burslem, the mother town, may be the venue and they are hoping to open it in 2020. Just hope it's not just for the privileged. Since the demise of free music lessons at school, music has become more and more for the well-off. John, my husband, only became a professional bass player because when he was at Ball Green Secondary Modern School on the outskirts of Stoke he just happened to be around when another pupil returned a cello saying my mum doesn't like the noise. So the teacher seeing John passing by said "You're a big lad, Paz, you can have it". John took to it like a duck to water and ended up playing double bass in the Scottish National Orchestra. Now the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. You could say the same for me as I don't think I would have learnt the violin except for having free lessons at school ( and the gift of a violin from a neighbour, who left it on the doorstep. How romantic is that!) And to think of the joy, fun and friendship I would have missed out on (and the tedious practice for all concerned, listeners as well as myself. My dad used to call it the groan box, but was more tolerant than sadly is the case with some families).

While I was attending Pro Corda I was privileged to watch a session of teaching via Skype to students in South Africa. I'm sure that you must all be aware of Arco and I know that several of my readers teach for Arco. Arco is an amazing organisation inspired by Dr Louise Lansdown which brings the possibility of learning a string instrument to those who would otherwise not have the opportunity to learn. Lucy Nolan's sister, Peggy, recently raised over £2,000 by learning the viola and passing Grade 5 with distinction (not surprising as she's an excellent cellist). Her diary on learning the viola in January's newsletter makes for amusing reading.

Maria Parfitt has organised several concerts to raise money for Arco using the skills of the Rosendal Viola Quartet – Robin Ireland, Louise Lansdown, Lucy Nolan and Gary Pomeroy. There is one coming up in Birmingham on April 30<sup>th</sup> which will take place at Birmingham *Second Cup* on New Street. This is a free event but there will be buckets for donations. The concert on May 10<sup>th</sup> is an afternoon tea party at Birmingham Dogs Home which is very near Birmingham International station . It starts at 14:00 with an arrival at 13:30 (how very mysterious). Adult tickets will be £10 and for students from Birmingham Conservatoire it will be £5. There will also be refreshments for which donations will be gratefully received. So not only will you be hearing excellent playing but it will also be fun and you will be contributing to a good cause. Don't forget the tour around the Dogs Home afterwards.

I went to the concert at the New Vic with Ensemble 360 last Monday, braving the displeasure of our leader of the North Staffs Symphony Orchestra as Monday night is our rehearsal night. It was excellent. In the Mozart trio for viola, clarinet and piano it was almost as though the clarinetist (Matthew Hunt) and the violist (Ann Beilby) were dancing together. No unease or worrying about notes just pure musical expression. Schumann *Märchenbilder* was stunning. Unfortunately I was behind the player (the New Vic is that theatre in the round) but I could admire her left hand. Absolutely still except for her fingers moving. None of this squirming around and twisting like a snake in its death throes!! But I had a friend who was on the other side of the theatre who could see her bow. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, which the violist took at some speed, my friend said that her bow hardly moved, she used so little of it. Not like me who sees a lot of notes, shrieks 'aargh' and start using loads of bow so that I look like a demented windmill or a puppet that has got out-of-control.

I don't know if you caught the string quartet programme on BBC 4 on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> March at 20:00. Well worth watching. May be able to find it in iPlayer. It was fascinating to see how technique has moved on. Quite a pronation bow hold in the earlier recordings. Something I'm desperately trying to

rid myself. Also a short section on the Heath Quartet playing Tippett with good shots of Gary Pomeroy and his immaculate technique. He looks so cheerful when he's playing. I would love to know his secret.

Until next month with news and views from sunny Stoke

Janet Pazio