

## News from Timothy Ridout: October 2016

I've been meaning to write something for the BVS for a while now, but it's been a very busy few months!

July started with a performance of Howells' Elegy for Viola, String Quartet and String Orchestra, which was a real discovery for me! I had known about the piece for quite a while, but it was only when I had an invitation to play it at the Royal Hospital Chelsea that I really got to know it. I then played a couple of concerts at the Roman River Music Summer Festival before going to Verbier for three weeks.

Some of you may have read my piece for 'The Violin Channel' but I would like to speak here more about the viola playing side, as for my other article I focused more on some of the other experiences. We were incredibly lucky to have three of the giants of viola playing there giving us masterclasses. The first session was with Nobuko Imai, and I worked through Brahms Op. 120 No 2 with her, and she shared with me many of her insights from playing this work over an incredibly long career, pointing out things which (having already had this sonata in my repertoire for seven years) I had never noticed. Then we had some classes with Lawrence Power where I worked through the Bartok Concerto, which were very inspiring as, in my opinion, his command of sound is second to none. The other thing which made the classes so insightful was that he really encouraged me to get better acquainted with the manuscript. He showed us some of his ideas, which are quite different to what is presented in the Serly Version or the Peter Bartok version, but once one takes a look at what Bartok has actually left us, and then also looks to the violin concerti to see how he uses slurs there is a real freedom for creating something unique and special in this piece. Looking at the manuscript of this work has recently become a real fascination for me. The other fascinating thing was speaking about control of articulation - the week with Lawrence showed me that characterisation is really controlled by articulation. This helped a lot with the speaking qualities of the Bartok. Finally I had a couple of lessons with Tabea Zimmerman which were equally inspiring! With her I chose to work on Bach and Walton. Bach solo suites and sonatas are something that I've always slightly struggled with playing on the viola, as it's not something that is really written for our instrument, though recently I've been trying to perform Bach more often, as it is unarguably great music. One of the great challenges of the cello suites is finding the depth and the resonance in the sound - something of which Tabea is a true master. I learnt a lot about finding the natural ring of the instrument, and also some great methods to dissect the music and then build it up again. After working in her way for a few days, I felt a lot more comfortable playing this music. In the second lesson I worked on the Walton Concerto, which is a piece that I've played a lot over the last few years. We mainly worked on big structural things and how to make a natural line of the movement as a whole. It was great to get away from the small details and work on the bigger picture.

Since Verbier, I have played a lot of Chamber Music! I had a lovely time at the Molyvos International Music Festival in Greece, after which I played at the 'Eggenfelden Klassisch' festival near Munich, then the Koblenz International Musik Festival and then I went to spend a week in the stunning surroundings of Prussia Cove!

Most recently I performed Verklärte Nacht with the Nash Ensemble at Wigmore Hall, and a programme of Brahms, Schumann and Kurtág at the Oxford Lieder Festival.

I am looking forward to playing the Walton Viola Concerto in Oxford Town Hall on 12th November!

Timothy Ridout