

RNCM Young Violas

My name is Thea Markus, I am nine years old and I play the viola. I have been lucky enough to be chosen to write an article about the latest RNCM Young Violas day, and I am going to tell you about all the fun things we got up to. There are six viola days this year and they take place on Sunday mornings. At the start, the people who were organising the day, Lucy and Ali, played a Telemann Duo, and we said what we thought was good and what we would like to try ourselves. Then Becky, another organiser, played the Crown of Roses as a trio with Lucy and Ali.

After that, we split into three groups and Becky told us a story about pirates, and each group got part of the story to improvise on. My group worked on different techniques and styles of playing and put together a piece of music that represented a storm. The other groups did pirates smuggling gold and feeling lonely after losing all the gold in a shipwreck.

Next, we did a mini masterclass in which I played a piece that I was performing in a festival a few days later. I got some very useful feedback, and playing in front of about 18 other viola players really helped to boost my confidence. Two other people played – one had only been playing a little while and the other was more advanced. Then, we listened to recordings of two famous soloists playing the same piece, the Introduction from Vieuxtemps Sonata in B flat. The people who were on the recording were called Nobuko Imai and Robert Diaz. We talked about the differences in their playing and what we liked about each.

After that, we split into three groups, one for children who were slightly younger and needed an easier piece, one for children who had been playing for longer and were about 8 to 11 years old, and one for the older children who wanted a challenge. The first group played When the Saints Came Marching In, of which they wrote part, the second group played a Theme by Mozart, and the third played the Crown of Roses by Tchaikovsky. My group worked a lot on communication, staying together and *sul tasto*, which is playing softly over the fingerboard. Finally, our parents came and we gave a concert in which we played the pieces we had learnt. I really recommend going to Young Violas because it is always loads of fun and I learn a lot of new things.

Thea Marcus
May 2017