

Jess Wyatt, Viola – author of blog ‘A viola player writes...’

It was a great privilege to be asked to write about my teaching and playing for the BVS newsletter - many thanks for inviting me! I have just set up a Facebook page to help me share some of my activities and teaching, so please visit it for regular performing and teaching updates
https://www.facebook.com/Jess-Wyatt-1719638204931564/info/?tab=page_info

After completing my Social Anthropology degree at St Andrews, I decided to study the viola further, so applied to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and received a scholarship to study with Jane Atkins, principal viola of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Whilst there, I met many fantastic musicians and talented students, as well as participating in the opportunities offered, such as playing side-by-side with the Scottish Ensemble and receiving masterclasses/chamber music coachings from outstanding musicians like the Brodsky Quartet and Ilya Gringolts. My blog, ‘A viola player writes’, was born out of a desire to keep track of what I was doing, with it also serving as the reflective writing component for my degree!

I am now embracing life as a freelance viola player and violin and viola teacher. I perform regular recitals with piano, and am a regular performer at the University’s lunchtime concert series. I have been fortunate to work with many fine pianists, and several years’ collaboration with Audrey Innes resulted in performances of many staples of the repertoire (the Brahms F minor Sonata, Schumann’s Märchenbilder, the Rebecca Clarke Sonata, Hindemith’s Sonata Op.11 No.4 and the Arpeggione Sonata plus others, including Schumann’s Adagio and Allegro and Enesco’s Concertstück. I am now working on a programme for next year’s season with pianist, Douglas Holligan, in which we plan to include Beethoven’s Notturmo, the Shostakovich Sonata and Vaughan Williams’ Romance. We performed York Bowen’s first sonata in April as part of the St Andrews Lunchtime concert series. I find working with a pianist immensely satisfying, allowing a level of detail of working that I love, added to the glorious sound-world that can be created with the combination of viola and piano.

I am also an extra player for the SCO, with whom I have performed at the Edinburgh International Festival. I also undertake work for their education department, which runs a community orchestra in St Andrews (StAFCO)- we are currently preparing for our annual Christmas concert! I am also on the extras list for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Scottish Opera, and play for many local groups such as the Heisenberg Ensemble and St Andrews Opera. I founded the St Andrews String Trio as an opportunity for local, high-level string chamber music-making, and play in the newly formed ‘Andreas Quartet’.

I am currently teacher of violin and viola at St Leonards School in St Andrews, where I started in September, and I have also been teaching both instruments privately since I graduated from RCS. This year, I held a ‘Summer String Day’ for all my pupils (inspired by the events organised by my first teacher, Jana Sims) which was a great success. After a day’s workshop, we had an informal concert, performing some of the Capriol Suite, several Scottish tunes that I had arranged, and several chamber music/solo items. I would love to arrange a similar event next year, maybe in collaboration with other local teachers.

At present, I play a 15 5/8” Juliet Barker viola, made in Cambridge, and use a bow by Howard Green, acquired in 2013 with the help of a family legacy.

Photos by Gillian Gamble of Gillian Gamble
Illustration and Photography

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