

Lake District Summer Music, 1 - 12 August 2016

LDSM is truly something different! The absolutely beautiful nature surrounding Ambleside and Brathay Hall make you feel peaceful and calm. I rarely experienced this feeling of concentrated practice and pure enjoyable music making in a setting like a summer school. Just after our arrival on Saturday afternoon we took the little path to the lake (see picture) and I immediately felt that this course would be very worthwhile.

Lessons started on Sunday and the viola class met for a general talk with Garfield Jackson. Where other instrumentalists went straight into intense masterclass type lessons the violists sat in a circle in Terrace Room 1 and discussed repertoire for the following few days. The players for Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (performed on the last night) stayed on and we had a sectional rehearsal on our prepared parts.

All lessons were open to other members of the course and I probably learnt as much listening to other lessons as in the lessons I had myself!

Over the following 10 days, I had two lessons with Roger Chase, two with Yuko Inoue and one with Garfield. All these lessons were unique in their teaching style and approach. Yuko for example let me play through the whole of Frank Bridge *Two Pieces* for viola and piano before making any announcements. She didn't interrupt me even when something clearly did not go as planned. Once I stopped playing she gave me more general comments like: 'You seem very comfortable with the set-up of your shoulder and chin rest,' and 'Let's see if we can find exercises to improve your handshape.'

I played exactly five bars plus a quaver of the *Allegro appassionato* (still *Bridge Two Pieces*) in my first lesson with Roger. I loved how he would specifically put his finger on the issues he observed: no vibrato on the first two notes, shift from the F# to G (fingering: 3 - 1), preparation of the handshape in the semiquavers in bar 3 plus bow distribution of the chord. He would not let me move to the next bar until I got it right at least once and he could see that I fully understood his point.

Garfield's teaching approach was very practically orientated, which for me being a German worked well. It was straight forward with demonstrations and several explanations. The three teachers were very different in their style, but could offer a lot of useful help and creative suggestions in solving certain problems.

In addition to the wonderful nature and unique viola lessons received at LDSM - the other main highlight of the course for me personally - excluding the several trips into Ambleside to buy handmade Bailey's fudge - was the chamber music making there. On the first day we were put into groups and I was down for a viola quintet with a very, very talented 1st violinist from Tokyo, another girl from Germany on 2nd fiddle (studying in Frankfurt), a violist from the US (currently studies with Roger in London) and an English cellist who studies in Copenhagen at the moment (see picture of our group after performing the 1st movement of Mozart's *Viola Quintet in C min* in Rydal Church).

Everyone seemed really happy with our performance and I truly enjoyed rehearsing and performing with these guys! None of the members knew each other before and I thought it was incredible to see how much we grew together in such a short time.

Throughout the time at LDSM there were three performances which were very memorable to me. Firstly, on the arrival night the Škampa Quartet performed Beethoven's *Op. 132 String Quartet in A minor* as part of their recital at Ambleside Church. This performance had such incredible energy! The second one was Sally Beamish's *Reed Stanzas (String Quartet No. 3)* performed by the Maxwell beard boys (or more formally Maxwell Quartet) in Victoria Hall. Last but not least was Haruka Katayama's (one of the participants of LDSM) performance of Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy* on the last evening. Such musical playing which I thought was simply world - class playing!

Kathi von Colson

1st September 2016