

## Viola News from Leeds - April 2017

I was asked a short while ago if I would be happy to report on 'viola related news' in and around the Leeds area, but to be frank with you, there's not a great deal of that currently.

What there are however, are plenty of opportunities for viola players of all ages to get involved in ensembles! Since moving to Leeds in September to begin studying music at the University of Leeds, I've played with a wide variety of ensembles. This has stretched from: a chamber orchestra and symphony orchestra within the University's music society, performing the likes of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* and Holst's *The Planets*, to a string ensemble performing world premieres of pieces based on the system of 'just intonation' and all that comes in between.

As a student viola player, I've also been asked to play in a few different quartets and play duets with fellow students which certainly keeps me, and fellow violists at the university, very busy. More recently, some of the viola players have clubbed together and started our very own viola sextet, playing arrangements of *A Night in May*, *The Swan*, and *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* (which has a particularly tricky third viola part to sight read at speed)!

All of what I've mentioned thus far only applies for students, but if you've gone past that stage in life then there are still many orchestras in the area to cater for you, including: Leeds Haydn Players, the White Rose Orchestra and the West Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra along with several other community, amateur and semi-professional orchestras.

Whilst there's currently nothing in the way of workshops for adult viola players (or at least none that I'm aware of), there is the Roundhay Music organisation that offers instrumental tuition and is probably best for starter musicians. If you're looking for good viola tuition (or indeed any instrumental tuition) for primary school children, then it's worth noting that Opera North run a programme called *In Harmony* where they go into Windmill Primary School and Low Road Primary School to give every Year 1-6 pupil free instrumental lessons and a free instrument (to loan), which has thus far had an extremely positive effect on both the pupils and the school's performance!

Whilst I realise a lot of this is broad and not very 'viola-centric' in content, I felt it important to give a general overview of the musical goings on for my first report, in and around the Leeds area for all ages and (hopefully) all interests.

**Simon J. N. Rowland (student viola player)**