

LARK *music*

ISSUE 4

GOOD VIBRATIONS 

Featuring Dame Evelyn Glennie



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Welcome

Goodness, where did this year go? It has been a busy time at Lark but I am pleased to say the music team is nicely settled into the London head office at Ibex House.

The good vibrations continue with all-exclusive features in this issue of LARKmusic and Dame Evelyn Glennie, who I will always remember playing Caliban's Dream during the London 2012 Olympics, shares her vision for music education with Lark Private Clients Director David Foster.

Talking of education, we congratulate Royal College of Music Director, Professor Colin Lawson, on being awarded the CBE in the Queen's Honours list and he talks to us about life at the RCM. He shares the moment when his first fell in love with music and we broaden this idea to invite readers to talk about their introduction to music.

We are also proud to introduce our new Lark Scholar Renate Sokolovska, who is studying at the RCM.

Steinway & Sons has been synonymous with fine pianos since 1853 and we have been learning about what goes on 'under the bonnet' of concert grand pianos from Director of Concert and Artists Services, Ulrich Gerhartz. Amazing!

The wonderful Endellion String Quartet grace our pages and as they approach their 38th season read on to find out the secret of their longevity!

Best wishes
Gemma Deavall
Divisional Director to Music Division

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Life on Mars

Virtuoso percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie shares her vision to teach the world to listen with Lark Private Clients Managing Director David Foster

Listening is the key to everything, according to Dame Evelyn Glennie – and not just music.

Her aim is to teach the world to listen but she has actually been doing it all of her life.

When she first voiced her ambition to be a solo percussionist music academics thought she had ‘landed from Mars’ but she made them come round to her way of thinking.

For Dame Evelyn, the lure of percussion started at a tiny primary school in the north-east of Scotland. She said: “The entire school had only two teachers and a maximum of about 43 pupils.

“Every Friday we all received a

general music lesson. By the time we left at the age of 11 to go to secondary school, we could all read music and had an appreciation of general music and music-making.

“I went to a secondary school that was a really good school for music, sport, drama and all sorts of subjects. Music was a hugely important part of the whole school’s ethos.

“There were many groups, orchestras, bands and choirs, so during one assembly, I could see the orchestra playing. It was where I saw percussion for the first time.

“When you see an orchestra play, that’s pretty special and I was intrigued by the variety of instruments. I was really inspired

and asked if I could have lessons, which were provided by the school system.

“My percussion teacher refused to allow his pupils to specialise. He was adamant that we would have a good grounding on hand-tuned timpani, on snare-drum technique, xylophone and vibraphone.

“With that, you could feed into many different types and styles of music. So, in fact, less was more.

“The city of Aberdeen didn’t have a percussion store, just a general music store which mainly sold pianos, so it meant all of our experiences playing music came from the piano repertoire, violin repertoire, flute and so on.



Dame Evelyn Glennie and David Foster play the Amadinda

Picture: Ian West



Dame Evelyn Glennie plays the Marimba at Harrogate

Picture: James Wilson

“We didn’t have tutor books and exercise books – we created our own exercises from pieces of music. All of the time, we were dealing with music as opposed to exercises, so by not having something meant that we created something else.

“The imagination really was completely ripe from the beginning.”

Dame Evelyn says all of the percussionists were given the opportunity to play solos during school and community concerts so she ‘just assumed’ that the whole world was full of solo percussionists.

She said: “It was pretty normal for us to play solos – it was only when I became a full-time student in London and said I wanted to be a solo percussionist that they thought I’d landed from Mars.

“The music professors were saying that no one has done this. Where is the repertoire? Why do you think you can do it?”

“I told them, ‘I am already doing it and have been for all of my school

days. What is the difference? Now I need some more substantial repertoire, I need composers to write for percussion rather than making arrangements’.

“When I went to audition for the Royal Academy of Music, I obviously did my best. I thought it went fine, and everything was OK.

“However, they wrote back and said they did not believe any professional orchestra would hire a hearing

“I said hang on a second, am I good enough to get in? Yes or no?”

impaired musician and therefore on that basis they would not be able to accept me.

“They said they did not think it would be fair that they took me on board

just for there to be no work at the end of it.

“I said ‘hang on a second, I do not want to be a member of an orchestra, so you are creating a problem there that doesn’t actually exist’.

“I asked them, ‘Am I good enough to get in. Yes or no?’

“They said: ‘Yes, however, we just can’t accept you.’

“I felt that it simply was not good enough. You can not start picking and choosing people even if they are of the standard to get in. I told them how I felt.

“One man on the panel was David Robertson and he listened and basically said, come back and we will give you a completely unprepared audition.

“The audition consisted of everything being done at the piano. There was no percussion playing whatsoever. It was all to do with music analysis, keyboard skills, figure base, transposition, looking at a score and deciding who might have written ▶

A musician is someone who creates sound and makes emotion through that sound and it connects with another person. So that is all about listening, and then what does that person do with that something?

► that, and why do you think that. Just general musicianship. I did not know what was going to come at me.

“Once that had finished, the Academy said, right, you can start in September.”

“David Robertson was a wonderful man and really hugely important to me during my student years.

“So from then on it was just a case of plugging away. I had two major TV documentaries made about me and that generated quite a lot of interest.

“From there I got invitations to play at after-dinner speeches and that allowed me to build up a repertoire and put little programmes together, and just get the experience of performing solo.”

Dame Evelyn is the first person to make a career out of solo percussion and her vision to teach the world to listen has evolved naturally through the whole idea of percussion in itself.

She said: “We are dealing with the oldest style of instruments, yet the repertoire is the most recent, and therefore you are not dependent on going into a record store or looking on YouTube and finding lots of performances for these pieces of music.

“You have to listen to yourself in order to play these pieces. You have to make a decision as regards to how you feel something might be played; so that’s the first thing.

“When asked to do masterclasses – that is very much a form of listening. Not just listening to what the players do there, but actually listening to that individual and why they are making the choices they are making, and how can you inspire them to move forward and have faith in their own sort of being as a musician.

“That is all about listening. It is not about this is how you do this or that is how you do that, this is how you

hold the stick or whatever it is ... it is asking them to listen themselves so that they can create their own journey. From that stems how listening becomes so crucial, in the workplace or the domestic situation.

“Most of the breakdowns or challenges that we have are to do with listening. They really do. It’s the one thing that is the glue between people.

“So for me, knowing that the body is not going to carry on as a performer for evermore, there will come a time whereby I won’t be happy with what I am doing. So I have to think also, well, what is a musician?”

“A musician is someone who creates sound and makes emotion through that sound and it connects with another person. So that is all about listening, and then what does that person do with that something?”

“Unfortunately, music is no longer regarded as an essential subject in schools and that is sad.



Dame Evelyn's collection of 2,000 percussion instruments include the new Aluphone, above, to ancient pieces from Polynesia

“And although more people are experiencing music in isolation because of the internet - more people are feeding music into their ears, but it is not making them better listeners.

“It is also slightly overloaded towards popular music which is absolutely crucial, but they are not going to have the patience to listen to a 20-30 minutes’ piece of music – not unless it has visuals and everything else attached to it.

“It is peeling back the senses again and thinking how we can communicate with each other. So all of the work we are all doing plays a part in that - the excitement of feeling that something is being created in front of our very own eyes.”

Dame Evelyn also feels strongly that music can help social cohesion. She said: “Participation could be quite a scary word but it doesn’t just mean picking up an instrument and playing. It could mean just simply being beside an instrument as it is being played by someone else. It is just talking about the experiences.

“I was talking with a colleague who wanted to find an instrument that might help a young child who was going through various challenges.

“When this child becomes angry, the automatic reaction is give them a drum and let them go bang, bang, bang. That, therefore, could be associated with anger.

“But anger doesn’t have to be associated with being loud and aggressive. It can be something very gentle. Listen to the resonance, make it perhaps a low sound so there is time to feel that. So, we are almost thinking of the opposites here.

“When you think about the power of sound as opposed to the power of music, then we can begin to connect with other people.

“The word ‘music’ is quite overloaded because the reaction could be, ‘I don’t know anything about music, I’m not musical, I don’t have rhythm, I can’t sing’ – all the negatives come down.

“Think about just the sound. Take the time to digest that sound element. Then you have a pathway to link it to another sound and then another sound. And that, then, becomes music.”



Dame Evelyn Glennie plays the waterphone

Picture: Jim Callaghan

2017 CONCERT DATES 2017

FEBRUARY 1

Glasgow Celtic Festival with Trilok Gurtu
Glasgow Royal Concert Hall,
Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

World première of Trilok and Dame Evelyn’s first collaborative creation, *The Rhythm in Me*, commissioned by Celtic Connections to celebrate the 70th anniversary of India’s independence in 2017.

The Celtic Connections programme runs from January 19 to February 5. Tickets £20-£23, call 0141 353 8000 or visit glasgowconcert halls.com

MARCH 12

Sounds of Science

Cambridge Corn Exchange,
Wheeler Street, Cambridge

Developed in collaboration with composer Jill Jarman and world history author Christopher Lloyd, *Sounds of Science* is an audio narrative that details nearly 100 scientific discoveries made over

the last 10,000 years. Audiences will be able to hear the story of how humans have changed the world from the first stone tools through to the nuclear age.

Visit cambridgelivetrust.co.uk

LISTEN IN

50 composers each wrote 50 bars for Dame Evelyn’s 50th birthday. Listen to “50 for 50” on Youtube and visit evelyn.co.uk

Playing around the office

Dame Evelyn says she was amazed at how well the community reacted to her *Playing Around the Office* series where she explores sound capabilities from using different sticks to strike cajons to ‘letting her imagination go’ playing intriguing waterphones.

Who’s Listening

A collection of short masterclass-like videos, released every other month, tackling a myriad of different aspects on being a musician.

Visit evelyn.co.uk

Learning from the master: Professor Colin Lawson teaching student Elliot Gresty at the Royal College of Music. Elliot is playing an English Clarinet, c1820

Picture: Chris Christodoulou



Tears of joy

Royal College of Music Director Professor Colin Lawson tells Lark Private Clients Director Julie Webb what moves him and why he thinks his CBE goes to many people

‘There have been occasions where I have been in tears listening to music played by the students – I am very moved by what they achieve.

When RCM Chairman Professor Lord Winston and I were at the RCM Symphony Orchestra’s performance of Richard Strauss’ Alpine Symphony neither of us could speak at the end of it. The music was so good.

Nobody can put a price on that.

I am lucky, doing things I adore. I love being surrounded by music and that makes all the bureaucracy and accountability worthwhile.

My CBE belongs to lots of people at the RCM; I have an awful lot of respect for my colleagues – the managers, musicians and administrators who make it such a stimulating place.

You have got to have good people around you, doing their job well. I like people to fly and to come to me with ideas. One of the best things I have done since joining the RCM in 2005 is to appoint incredible staff, as well as persuading other great people to stay.

My parents were controlling so my leadership style tends to be the opposite of that. It seems to work and helps create the warm, inspiring atmosphere which is so important.

Music is a language and an activity that transcends all ages. That’s why I like to play in staff-student concerts, although it can be a scary experience because the students are so accomplished.

We have 800 students and each one is treated as an individual. They are inspired by what goes on here and we

give them freedom in musicality to develop their potential.

The individual attention is key and the London location is good for everyone in the building, but it’s no good to be sitting back - they have to be out there. We put a high premium on entrepreneurship in our vision statement because students need to create a job for themselves - and that is why we have good employability.

We have a very high success rate in students leaving here and being in work or studying.

‘*Music is a language and an activity that transcends all ages*’

We have a dynamic senior management team – on the artistic side we have Stephen Johns who was Vice President of EMI Classics; keen fundraising through Lily Harriss who came from Dulwich Picture Gallery and Talia Hull, in Communications, who is ex-BBC.

Communication has got so much sharper and in a global market it is important to keep our eyes on Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Moscow and Beijing. According to the QS World University Rankings we are the top conservatoire in the UK, second in Europe and third in the world for Performing Arts.

The RCM has led the charge and it is a very rich environment. We offer something special, a broad and holistic experience.

Masterclasses by top musicians such as Maxim Vengerov and Imogen Cooper are another reason why students are attracted here.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Most of our plans centre round modernisation and the £40 million philanthropic investment in our facilities. The new performance spaces, practice rooms, a restaurant and museum will be created around an open-air quadrangle at the centre of our estate.

We are knitting together the past, present and future; the new building will give more people access to excellence, opening the college to those who are not quite sure if they can come in - perhaps they find the doors rather forbidding. We need to get past that.

I was at a Brexit meeting with the new Mayor of London and it was agreed how important access is. It’s a tragedy that there is so much musical potential not being realised in this country. We have an obligation to do something about it.

Schools come into the College and our Sparks programme reaches thousands of people but I would like to reach more and the digital revolution may help us to do that.

We have recently acquired Markova House, making our facilities about 1.5 times bigger, so it will broadly be relieving space. It contains the original RCM concert hall from 1887 and there was a period it was used for the Royal College of Organists. It will be good to reclaim it for rehearsal space and for opera.

What the students want is practice facilities. We are open 24/7 so we do what we can for student experience. We don’t have immediate plans ►

‘It all started with the Messiah when I was five’

► to expand the student numbers – although e-learning will be on the agenda in the future and we will be looking at delivering degrees remotely.

We offer music education but we want to create more of a university experience, a broader range of degree options. And because we want to attract more people our museum will be key because it has so many treasures. We want it to come into the centre stage.

Musical instruments were not built to be looked at. People should hear them and we will make copies of the instruments so visitors can try them. We are also going to take some instruments on a roadshow while the museum is closed during the building works. We’ll digitise our collection, too, so there’s lots to do.

The museum will be a totally different experience. Over the years we have built up the collection and we have the oldest string keyboard c1480 and an autograph of Mozart’s C minor Piano Concerto K. 491.

I am enthusiastic about connecting sound and vision and got Hugo Dalton to paint the walls of the original museum. We like students to learn across different genres and Hugo is an embodiment of that.

Looking ahead, we also need to consider digital and the human interface. We go to Korea, Japan and China to audition potential students and I don’t think that will change because we must turn up to see a musician inhabiting the stage.

Videoconferencing can be useful for an afternoon’s teaching but it is not a substitute – you are not going to get a teacher to help put a bow on a string if they are 3,000 miles away!

Masterclasses are often put online and the numbers visiting our site are astonishing, up to five million hits.

Video is also good for feedback, so for instance, an orchestra can see what went well or what went wrong, so it is



Mozart devotee Colin Lawson with a Clarinet in C, after Baumann c1805

a fantastic learning resource. From the highest quality one-to-one teaching and advocacy to e-learning, the RCM is embracing the 21st century. ”

Colin started playing the recorder at the age of five after he heard Handel’s Messiah at Ripon Cathedral, in Yorkshire.

He moved on to play the piano and by eight he was playing the clarinet. He joined the National Youth Orchestra and went on to study music at Oxford University.

Colin’s interest in ‘the academic [side of things]’ took him to a series of university posts which he has combined with playing clarinet in many high-profile concerts such as concertos at Carnegie Hall.

Colin has an international profile as a period clarinetist and has played principal in most of Britain’s leading period orchestras. His discography comprises concertos by Fasch, Hook, Mahon, Mozart, Spohr, Telemann, Vivaldi and Weber, while his recent Mozart Clarinet Quintet and

associated fragments CD reached the top 20 in the classical charts.

Colin co-edited the Cambridge History of Music and Performance in 2012 with Robin Stowell and is now working on the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Historical Performance in Music.

As well as music, Colin and his wife Hilary (a former manager at Radio 3) like to travel – from relaxing on the Aeolian Islands, near Sicily, to watching a Yankees baseball game with their son, Oliver, while in the US.

Oliver, 31, is a BBC Sport scheduling manager and Queen’s Park Rangers fan so Colin occasionally joins him to watch home matches.

Mozart devotee Colin has a collection of 30 old clarinets and copies, matching repertoire from c1700-c1930. His favourite instrument in the collection is a basset clarinet which he commissioned in 1988.

Colin said: “I commissioned the instrument from the Cambridge maker Daniel Bangham in order to perform Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto and Quintet on period instruments.

“It has four extra notes at the bottom of the compass and the extra tubing is contained in an S-bend within the box just above the bell.

“I have played these pieces around the world and recorded the Concerto in 1989 and the Quintet in 2012.

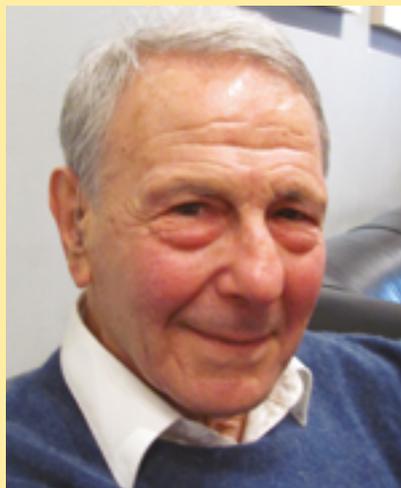
“It is a unique instrument and special to me. When playing such an instrument I learned one important rule from Horn Professor Nigel Black: “You’ve got to know what’s going to come out of the instrument before you blow it.”



See the RCM’s redevelopment plans or a schedule of concerts at rem.ac.uk or for details of joint Lark-RCM evenings email julie.webb@larkinsurance.co.uk

Share your story of falling in love with music

PROFESSOR COLIN LAWSON WAS CAPTIVATED BY MUSIC AT THE AGE OF FIVE. WE ARE ASKING READERS TO SHARE MEMORIES OF WHEN THEY FELL IN LOVE WITH MUSIC AND RETIRED PROFESSOR LESLIE BRENT, WHO ATTENDS AS MANY LONDON CONCERTS AS HE CAN, TELLS HIS REMARKABLE STORY



Professor Leslie Brent

Retired Professor Leslie Brent was one of the UK's leading transplant immunologists and part of the team presented with the 1960 Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology.

He was born in 1925 in a small town in north-east Germany, not far from the Baltic Sea.

His love of music came at a time of great turmoil in his life. He said: "My parents were Jewish and in 1936 I was subjected to persecution by my form teacher (who often appeared in brown shirt uniform) as well by fellow pupils, who took to pelting me with stones. My parents arranged a safe haven in a Jewish boys' orphanage in Berlin.

"The orphanage director, Dr. Kurt Krohn, was devoted to his 100 or so charges and, with his staff, ran the orphanage to the best of his ability and coped with an influx of boys such as myself who were at risk.

"He took a liking to me and arranged for me to attend a Jewish Gymnasium, where he thought I would thrive better.

"In the spring of 1938, when the lives of German Jews were already severely restricted, he invited me to accompany him to a choral concert, held by musicians and singers in a large synagogue. The work performed was Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

"Although it was long, and I was at times in danger of falling asleep, this performance made a very deep impression on me and kindled my interest in music. This concert was a revelation and became an important influence.

"Just before my retirement I joined the Crouch End Festival Chorus and over the next 15 years I took part in two performances of *Elijah*. This was for me a deeply moving experience.

"Although I do not play an instrument, music has been one of my passions throughout my life and has helped me get through troublesome periods."

To share your story in LARKmusic magazine please email isabella.valentini@larkinsurance.co.uk

Game of ping-pong offered passport to a new life

A chance game of ping-pong gave Leslie Brent the passport to a new life. He was one of the first of 10,000 child refugees to arrive at Dovercourt reception centre, near Harwich.

Head teacher Anna Essinger, who had fled Germany to open Bunce Court School on the North Downs, in Kent, was waiting at the Dovercourt, ready to take some of the youngsters back to her school. She had travelled with one of her pupils, Gabi Adler.

Leslie, 91, said: "Gabi put in a good word for me as we had got on well playing ping-pong. When I bumped into Anna, she knew who I was and asked 'would you like to come to my school?' I stammered 'yes please' and that was it, my life took a new direction. That event profoundly affected my survival, development and career.



"Bunce Court became a fixed point of reference for me. I felt loved and that is so important for any child."

Leslie, left, never saw his parents or only sister again. He said: "It was not for many years that I discovered their fate but I am grateful to the staff for dealing so discreetly with the loss of my family, burdened as they must have been with their own loss of loved ones." He added: "The school also taught me to form critical opinion and stand on my own two feet."

Appreciation of arts and classical music was encouraged by Anna Essinger. She put on concerts in the school's amphitheatre and invited the local community, friends and supporters to watch performances from Shakespeare to *The Magic Flute*.



Ulrich Gerhartz in his workshop at Steinway & Sons in London Picture: Will Tisdall

PIANO FORTE

ULRICH GERHARTZ IS THE KEY MAN AT STEINWAY & SONS IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. AS DIRECTOR OF CONCERT AND ARTISTS SERVICES HE IS PIANO TECHNICIAN EXTRAORDINAIRE TO THE STARS, WRITES PRIVATE CLIENTS DIRECTOR JULIE WEBB

Ulrich Gerhartz talks about pianos as if they are people, very important people.

“They are all individuals,” he says. “I select them when they are young and raw, but they need time and a lot of work to find themselves and develop. That’s what I give to them.”

He leans into a Model D concert grand piano in his London workshop at Steinway Hall and says: “I went to the Hamburg factory six weeks ago and selected this piano for the London Concert Hire fleet.

“The instrument is just starting to wake up. I like it because it was born right, with a character suitable to be part of our fleet.”

So we are not just talking about pianos, but personalities.

Another piano Ulrich is particularly fond of is the ‘Old Lady’ at Wigmore Hall. He says ‘she’ is much-loved by the older generation of pianists who appreciate the history of the keyboard and her ‘warmer, singing quality’.

The Old Lady is one of three resident Steinway & Sons Model D concert grand pianos which he maintains at the London concert hall, in Wigmore Street, a stone’s throw from Steinway’s headquarters.

He said: “The Old Lady has been rebuilt many times and that has included being sent back to Hamburg for repairs on two occasions. This included refinishing of the cast iron

frame and this year she needed a new pinblock before being restrung once more.

“This work is like open-heart surgery and can only be carried out in the Hamburg factory. Happily, she came back to my workshop with a new lease of life.

“She was built in 1980 and is a unique case; generally a well-used concert grand will only see up to 15 to 20 years’ service before being retired.

“Violins last hundreds of years but that’s not the case with performance pianos.

“Of course, we are talking about performance pianos here, a domestic piano will stay in a family for generations.”

Ulrich continued: “These performance instruments are a massive feat of engineering; there is 20 tons of tension in a grand piano, held by a cast iron frame within a hardwood case that supports the frame. When you create tension and pressure at the same time you want the soundboard to vibrate freely, to take the energy from the vibrating string and push out the sound of the piano.

“There are 12,000 parts in a Steinway and they all have to be in tune with each other. I am like a mechanic, under the bonnet of a high performance piece of engineering. This job is all about performance. Yes – performance, performance, performance.”

When concert halls or individual pianists order a new piano Ulrich often travels to Hamburg to hand-pick one that he thinks will be an appropriate choice. He said: “When I select a piano I am looking for a specific character which will ►

► suit a particular venue, pianist or repertoire.”

He said: “Pianos for the Proms, for example, are selected to be suitable to fill a 5,000-seater auditorium and successfully compete with a full orchestra.

“For instance, if the programme includes the five Prokofiev concertos, with three different pianists due to play, it is crucial that the piano suits the venue and the repertoire, almost regardless of players – that’s the brief.

“However, at Wigmore Hall, a piano is prepared for a softer sound, with less sound projection. It has to be easy to control, while at the Royal Albert Hall pianos need a bright and clear sound with fast projection.”

Ulrich’s attention to detail and love of his trade goes far beyond being a job. He considers his work, and that of his team of technicians, as ‘a service to music’.

He is on call seven days a week and runs his own diary. He said: “My job is a lifestyle. I am fully immersed into this world of pianos, I never really stop.”

His work supports the world’s top pianists – and many of them are now close friends, such is the bond between player and technician.

He flies across the globe to prepare venue pianos for concerts or carry out an annual service which is part of his unique Steinway package.

One of his many famous clients is concert pianist Murray Perahia. “Murray is a great hero of mine,” says Ulrich.

The admiration is reciprocal and Murray describes Ulrich as a ‘tireless worker who strives for the highest ideals’. Murray told LARKmusic: “I have worked with Uli over many years, in concerts, recording and private work.

“All aspects of taking care of the piano whether it be voicing, tuning, regulating the action, pedal ... he gives everything the utmost care and attention.

“I trust him completely and I know that if Uli is working on my piano it will be at its best, its optimum condition.”

In response to such an endorsement Ulrich is modest. He said: “Knowing

pianists is important, I file away the information. When you look after a pianist for a concert you do not just look after the piano but the whole package; how the piano is lit, how the pianist like to sits on the stage, what preference of action and tone – bright and light, slightly heavier – and everything in between.”

There is a need to recruit more piano technicians, possibly students who do not follow a full-time music career

Ulrich says he does not have perfect pitch and uses a tuning fork as a reference for the required pitch. Everything is guided by well-trained ear and experienced hands.

“Every note has to pull its weight –

every hammer, every string, every key,” he says.

It was never Ulrich’s plan to become probably the world’s most important piano technician. He said: “I wanted to train as an architect or be involved in design.

“As a schoolboy I was always drawing, painting and making furniture but I wanted to learn how to make something properly. I grew to realise that the dialogue between the architect and craftsmen is not always easy.

“I thought I would learn a handicraft so I would have that understanding before becoming an architect.

“I applied to Steinway & Sons in Hamburg, got an interview, and as soon as I set foot in the factory I knew I wanted this to be my career. It was as simple as that – I have been here 30 years and I have never looked back.

“I was one of four apprentices in the workshop and we were all given woodwork tools, our bench and the blue apron of the cabinet maker – and I am still proud to wear the blue apron today.



Julie Webb watches Ulrich at work

Picture: Will Tisdall



Concert pianist Murray Perahia

Picture: Nana Watanabe

“We had to go into the timber yard and choose a piece of wood, complete with its bark, and make it into a plank. For the first 10 weeks we were trained in cabinet making of the finest quality, the quality expected by Steinway & Sons.

“For three and a half years the apprenticeship took us through piano case-making, rim bending, sound board and veneer departments, action assembly, regulation, tuning and voicing on both upright and grand pianos. Twice a year we were sent to a specialist school near Stuttgart to learn the theory and construction of piano manufacturing.

“After my apprenticeship, I knew I did not want to work in the factory. Almost bizarrely, my parents transferred to London and so in 1989 when I visited them and asked the General Manager at Steinway & Sons in London for a place, he said ‘when do you want to start?’

“In London’s restoration centre I could learn to rebuild rather than make new pianos. London is also, let’s be honest, the place to be.

“Our showroom sells more pianos than any other dealer in Europe – and London is where the greatest

players all come for concerts; the Royal Festival, Wigmore Hall, the Barbican and so on.

“In 1994, I took over the Steinway Concert and Artists Department and got involved in building up a first-class fleet of concert pianos at Steinway Hall. I introduced a regular maintenance and replacement programme in all major concert venues to ensure the highest standard of pianos are available to pianists.

“As a result, the quality of pianos nationwide is much improved which makes the Steinway brand stronger. The demand for quality has grown and will always be there.”

Ulrich believes that the price of a Steinway piano, and the servicing, is sometimes misunderstood. He said: “People think they are expensive but after visiting the factory to see how much labour and loves goes into building the pianos they understand!

“Steinway pianos have the best possible sound because of their unique construction and the materials used, as well as the time and skill put into each one. I would not be in this profession if Steinway was not striving only for the very best.

I trust Uli completely and if he is working on my piano I know it will be at its best, its optimum condition

Murray Perahia

“The pianos we build in Hamburg allow me, and artists, to be creative with touch and tone. I could not look after artists if I did not have the infrastructure to create the sound I want – it would be like a master chef who is told he or she could only use cheap ingredients – they would lose everything that inspires them to create the greatest dishes.”

Ulrich also feels strongly that there should be more opportunities for people to join his profession. Steinway has apprentices and Ulrich also mentors many freelance technicians at venues worldwide.

He said: “There’s a shortage of qualified piano technicians and tuners. There is a need to recruit more, possibly using students who do not follow a path into full-time music. Steinway needs to have the best technicians to look after the best pianos.

“Our reputation is everything and the pianos we have on concert platforms all over the world are a real responsibility for Steinway & Sons. Our biggest support and quality control is through our artists who choose to play our pianos.

“I feel deeply responsible for being given charge of these pianos. I am a custodian – I work for Steinway and I regard these as my pianos.”



A Lark Insurance and Steinway & Sons evening will be held early in 2017. To express an interest in attending contact julie.webb@larkinsurance.co.uk

Fabulously four

As the Endellion String Quartet approaches its 38th season, Lark asks the four musicians what keeps them together

Psychologists say a moment's awe is good for your health – a feeling of admiration and elevation can erase the stresses of everyday life.

At a recent Lark-sponsored concert given by the Endellion String Quartet at Wigmore Hall, it is likely that the well-being of the audience went up a few notches while listening to a scintillating programme of classical music.

There was a collective gasp and whispers echoed around the London venue when the Quartet's masterful rendition of Beethoven's String Quartet in F Op 59 No.1 came to a close.

"They are so together," agreed first-time guests, while regular followers nodded in acknowledgement at the spirit, romance and intensity of the music.

The Endellion String Quartet – Andrew Watkinson (violin), Garfield Jackson (viola) and David Waterman (cello) – have worked together for 37 years, while Ralph de Souza (violin) joined them in 1986. The musicians' mutual respect for each other's talent shines through their work.

So what is the secret of their longevity?

Andrew: We've been lucky. Our life is a bit like living in a house with five

Rembrandts and three van Goghs; every piece we play is a masterpiece and there's infinite depth.

We all have strong musical ideas and those ideas are not too far apart. Most of the time, we do not struggle to find pieces that will satisfy us.

There's also a practical reason to which the quartet attribute their 'luck'. From the beginning they have rehearsed at David's north-west London home.

Garfield: It's been our base for practice since Day One and always having somewhere central to meet has been a key factor. The room where we play is light, it has a high ceiling and the acoustics are really good. It's a great space to rehearse.

On the practical side, we can drive into London and park before we go to concerts. It has made life much easier.

Andrew: We've just kept on playing. We had no particular plan and we just continue to work towards the next concert. Suddenly 20 years and then 30 years have passed.

Ralph: We never really think in time. We carry on doing it – if we did give it too much thought it would be terrifying.

I have been playing since I was 10, when I first came over from India - that was when I played in my first quartet.

We all teach at music colleges in London as well as at courses around the country. We also mentor non-music groups, too, so we are always busy.

Garfield: Playing in a quartet was not something I was going to do. But no matter what I tried, fate sucked me in. Just before we got together I'd left another quartet and had handed over my viola to my successor – but within an hour the phone rang and it was Andrew asking me to join another quartet. ►



The Endellion String Quartet: Above, from left, Andrew Watkinson, Ralph de Souza, Garfield Jackson and David Waterman. Right: Concentration during rehearsals - plus slippers and mugs of tea



Pictures: Will Tisdall



In rehearsal: From left, Andrew Watkinson and Ralph de Souza

Picture: Will Tisdall

► **Andrew:** The wonderful thing playing the music we do, is that so much of it can be learned forever and we can continue to improve on how to communicate its extraordinary depth.

David: We have a large repertoire covering centuries from Purcell to the present day. The core is the Austro-German line from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert through Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms to Schoenberg, Webern and Berg.

Over the years we have developed a way of approaching each composer in this line and although each piece is a unique individual, there are family resemblances between them which hopefully give richness and depth to one's interpretations over time.

Composers out of that tradition who perhaps wrote one or two quartets – such as Sibelius and Smetana – present different challenges and we work hard to try to enter into the spirit of each style.

The French works of Debussy and Ravel are full of colour; refined, delicate and full of subtle perfume. They are distinct from their German contemporaries and from each other, and from the genius of Faure.

Ralph: It's funny, though, talking about French and German music.

When it comes to instruments, everyone wants to own a good French bow. The Italians make the best violins and many consider the best music is German! We need a British quality component.

The answer? We at Lark consider the Endellion String Quartet to be that very great British component.

Music is a language, not just a background

The Endellion String Quartet's longevity has also brought them to the attention of major organisations who have been quick to see that the musicians' unique decision-making, understanding and acceptance of each other's roles are skills that can be transferred.

Andrew: Teamwork is what companies are after – and project management.

Why are we still together? Perhaps it is because the music is so astonishing and it's a lifetime of work

People are interested in how we work together and why we still do it, after all this time. They want to know if we criticise each other, how we deal with disagreements and how we make decisions.

I tell them it's always very civilised. We play bridge before a concert, and during the interval, and try to keep relaxed.

David: Some people may not know

much about music so we demonstrate how many ways a piece can be played, how much choice we have working together as a team and how we go about resolving any conflict to create a harmonious melody.

Many people are amazed by being in a room and hearing music at close hand. They love how immediate it is when we resolve things together.

We get them to sit with us, literally in the middle of us, and they get a true sense of our communication.

We have, over time, developed ways of defusing and avoiding contention, although it is impossible to communicate why we are still together.

Perhaps it is because the music is so astonishing and it's a lifetime of work. Music is a language, not just a background. It has to be spoken.



For details on the Endellion String Quartet's teamwork and leadership sessions please contact Jessica Sharp, Director of Sponsorship and Corporate Events, at jessicasharp@btinternet.com
For the Endellion String Quartet's concert dates visit endellionquartet.com



MUSICAL NOTES

News from Julie Webb
Lark Private Clients Director

Many Happy Returns to Nigel Kennedy who turned 60 on December 28.

His CD, *My World*, was released a few days before his birthday and I found it touching to learn that the first part of the album, *Dedications*, salutes his mentor Yehudi Menuhin.

Yehudi recognised Nigel's talent early on, gave him a scholarship and paid for his tuition and lodging for 10 years. Nigel acknowledges: "I probably wouldn't have been a classical musician except for him putting me in that environment."

Nigel shot to fame in 1989 with a recording of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* but the new CD features his own compositions. He said: "My vision is to make music that transcends all conventions."

Dedications is also a tribute to other musical role models such as Isaac Stern, Stéphane Grappelli and Mark O'Connor.

Nigel now divides his time between homes in the UK and Poland. He is married to Polish lawyer Agnieszka and has one son.

Sea of music

Another violinist who I much admire is Kerson Leong, who performed in the Lark-sponsored former prizewinners concert at the Menuhin Competition this year.

Kerson, a Canadian, is one of a growing number of musicians who have been enjoying concerts at sea!

He joined the Queen Elisabeth Music Voyage aboard the *Silversea's Silver Wind* this summer and said: "We played on the ship and stopped in Portugal and Spain to give concerts. It was a wonderful experience performing Bruch *Concerto #1* at the Alcazar, in Seville, and the *Monasterio De San Jeronimo*, in Granada."

Concert pianists Rebeca Omordia and Miki Sawada have also gained a great acclaim while performing on cruise ships. Fred. Olsen's 900-guest ship *Braemar*



Nigel Kennedy has recorded a CD which is the first of his own compositions

was buzzing with talk of Rebeca's interpretation of Ravel's *Scarbo* and his hallucinatory score from *Gaspard de la Nuit*.

Rebeca, who was mentored by Julian Lloyd Webber after she won the Delius competition at Birmingham Conservatoire, said: "Every concert is for the audience, not yourself. The moment you start playing you hear them, you know them, and you are able to take them with you."

Julian Lloyd Webber said: "Rebeca plays with a depth of insight and understanding which is all too rare."

When Miki Sawada was chosen to perform at the christening of Holland America Cruise ship *MS Koningsdam*, she was the first to play the ship's new Steinway Model B concert grand piano.

Miki and the ship's chamber orchestra performed flawless renditions of the Netherlands' National Anthem and US National Anthem in front of Queen Maxima of the Netherlands. Miki, a Yale School of Music

graduate, told LARKmusic: "It was an amazing experience. "When sailing, we play every day so I get to know my audience. That is unusual for a musician and, on the next sailing, it all happens all over again!"

"The Lincoln Center is an area on the ship where passengers stop by and I have come to like this."

Visit rwsandassociates.com/lincolncenterstage

Never too late

I played the French horn as a teenager but wanted something smaller to carry so for my 21st birthday I asked for a flute. Earlier this year I decided it was time to bring it out again. I found a local teacher and had to learn from scratch to eliminate bad habits such as recorder fingers!

I have just passed my Grade 2 with distinction and I'm now getting on with Grade 3. So it doesn't matter what age you are – you can still learn. I love my lessons and my teacher and I have a good laugh!

Read my Lark Ascending blog at larkinsurance.co.uk



ICE BABY

Meet new Lark Scholar Renate Sokolovska

When Renate Sokolovska was a baby her mother would wrap her tightly in a blanket and leave her outside in a cradle.

There's nothing too unusual about that except the temperature in Siberia was -25C.

Renate's Latvian father, Daumands, and her Russian mother, Tatyana, had moved to Siberia when Daumands was appointed as Pastor in the town of Novokuznetsk.

Renate says her mother, Tatyana, still insists the fresh air was good for her only daughter.

Renate, 30, said: "Perhaps I do have strong lungs because of my mother's theory!"

She added: "Novokuznetsk is a mining town and my first memories, apart from the snow and ice, were of my parents taking me and my brothers to the Banya, the traditional Russian bath.

"Here we would have our weekly wash and then have to run into the snow – then do it all over again. It's a traditional Russian idea and considered good for body strength. I am rarely ill, and have great resilience, so it might have worked.

"Actually, my parents have had some mad ideas over the years; after the fall of the Soviet Union we were able to reclaim some beautiful land in rural Latvia, where they decided to try their hand at growing potatoes. It was a wonderful experience, but the combination of marauding wild boar and lack of good schools soon took us on to Riga.

"I still say, though, we grew the best potatoes ever!

"My parents went on to form a church rock band, touring across Russia, the US and Europe. They have always loved music and as a child I would

watch my mother play the piano and my father sing.

"Dad also played the viola and so I wanted to play, too. However, he had a different dream for me.

"Dad bought me a flute and I took to it straight away. In my first year of playing I won second prize in a competition – although I was tiny and played on a piccolo.

"I left my school after a couple of years to study at the Emil Darzin Music School.

"Later, when Latvia joined the



Resilient: Left and above, Lark Scholar Renate Sokolovska

European Union, my father was given the opportunity to study for a Masters in Theology so in 2002 our family moved to Bracknell, in Berkshire.

"We thought we would only be in the UK a year until my father said he needed longer for his studies. My brother Peteris, who plays the cello, and I then applied to the Purcell School. I was 17 and Peteris was 14.

"I also have two other brothers; Janis who is studying a PhD at Queen Mary's University, and Richard, who

is studying A-levels.

"At the Purcell School I studied with Anna Pope, who is an exceptional teacher, and went on to take my degree at the Royal Academy of Music.

"I went out to work, touring and playing across UK and Europe. Since then I realised that when you are working there is no time to perfect your technique, so my boyfriend, composer George Stevenson, and I took a year out to study in Russia.

"George studied composition and I took advanced studies at The Moscow Conservatoire with Olga Ivusheikova and Oleg Hudyakov.

"It inspired me to further my learning and I was thrilled to be accepted for the Royal College of Music Orchestral Performance Masters Programme.

"I want to spend two years completely immersing myself in learning. When I found out I had received a scholarship from Lark Insurance everyone said 'you are lucky, they are lovely people'.

"It is no exaggeration to say I would not be able to pursue my musical ambitions without Lark's help.

"At the recent Lark music evening at the RCM I was nervous but when I met David Foster and Julie Webb they were so warm and encouraging. I can't tell you how happy I was."

Lark Private Clients Director Julie Webb said: "Renate is a hugely talented flautist. She is an absolute delight we hope we can help her achieve her dream of playing in an orchestra."



To see Renate's full musical biography visit larkinsurance.co.uk

To express an interest in attending a concert featuring Renate please contact julie.webb@larkinsurance.co.uk



Out & About

with Isabella Valentini

Lark Musical Instruments Division

ISABELLA VALENTINI READ MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM BEFORE WORKING AS A FREELANCE SOPRANO AND SINGING TEACHER. WHILE OUT JOGGING SHE MET A LARK INSURANCE MANAGER AND, TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT, JOINED THE MUSIC TEAM THIS SUMMER.

I might be one of the newest members of the Lark team but I've already gained a reputation for being one of the chattiest! I love meeting people and here's a snippet of some of the events I've attended in the second half of 2016.

Thaxted Festival

We were proud to sponsor the Thaxted Festival and Lark Scholar Alexandra Lomeiko performed Vaughan Williams' Lark Ascending in the opening concert of the centenary festival (which was launched by Gustav Holst in 1916). If the person who made the carrot cake is reading ... I'd love the recipe!

Cremona

I was told that Mondomusica is the violin makers' Mecca and I was overwhelmed by the scale of the exhibition. Violins, violas, cellos, guitars, bows, wood, tools, pegs – you name it, it was there! I even managed to brush up on my Italian and talk to some of the local makers about their trade. We spent some time on Florian Leonhard's trade stand before the Lark Party (picture below), hosted at the beautiful Palazzo Trecchi. The guest list included dealers and makers, musicians, friends and new acquaintances – it was such a success that we've booked for next year.

We left for home tired but content. Delayed flights and food poisoning could not dampen our spirits!

Amati

We hosted a trade stand at the Amati exhibition in the Langham Hotel, London. Jamie, Sarah, Charlott and the team made us feel welcome and our supply of chocolates also made us a popular fuelling station. This was a great way to make new friends and check in with some of our longstanding and faithful clients to hear about their trade and work, plus we were treated to some beautiful chamber music. I left feeling guilty for not having played my viola in a while and decided to revisit some of the Bach suites ...

World Premiere Wednesday Partnership

Our World Premiere Wednesday partnership with the London Sinfonietta continues to flourish. Tenor Mark Padmore and principal cellist Tim Gill recently brought a splash of new music to the early morning breakfast and I found it a perfect way to start the day.

British Violin Making Association

Rebecca, Emma and I had a fun day at the annual British Violin Making Association (BVMA) event in Oxford. It was a lovely opportunity to catch up with clients and forge new relationships. We learned about violin rosin (our Lark-branded rosin went down a treat) and how the weighted balance differs between a classical bow and a baroque bow.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

I've also been lucky to get in on the action with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (Baroque music is my weakness) and have attended a chamber recital in Marylebone plus one of their 'Night Shifts' (in a pub in Islington where we sat on the floor. Google it!). We're hoping that the OAE can help us to further understand historic instruments and historical performance practice.



The diary for 2017 is already overflowing with musical treats and events. We love meeting our wonderful clients so if you are interested in joining us at a Lark Music event, please contact me at isabella.valentini@larkinsurance.co.uk

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