

Derek Reville (violin)

Glorious music and expert tuition in a beautiful setting.

I am so pleased I chose to attend the 2016 Baroque Summer Course and thankful to the people at Cambridge Early Music in helping me be able to do this with the help of a bursary. It was an immersive week, full of wonderful music, inspiring and informative coaching, friendly people and opportunities for rewarding music-making. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and would recommend it to anyone interested in playing, singing and learning about Baroque music and historically-informed performance practice. I attended the course as a keen amateur (occasionally professional) violinist. I've played violin all my life and long had a passion for music of the baroque period and historical performance practice. Early in 2016 I'd taken the plunge and started playing an instrument with gut strings with a baroque-style bow. I loved it, and felt I wanted to take things further and learn as much as I could whilst still at an early stage. The Cambridge Early Music Summer School looked perfect and was highly recommended by several people I'd spoken to.

Though I was really keen to attend, the fee for such a course can, naturally, be a little off-putting. My own circumstances, being a low earner with family responsibilities, made it extra difficult to manage. I was therefore delighted when Cambridge Early Music accepted my application and awarded me a part bursary to help me attend. Moreover, having now experienced the course, I can say I think it is well worth the cost. The course was really well designed and run by the people at Cambridge Early Music, who were always on-hand to help. The tutors were attentive, involved in the sessions and carefully considered the repertoire and groupings for the chamber music sessions (themselves coached) to give people the best experience; whether affording them opportunities to lead ensembles, take solo parts or explore less familiar repertoire.

As a violinist, I received detailed individual help in technique and performance in a masterclass with Judy Tarling (violin and viola tutor) and I learnt much from watching and playing with others. I felt the tutors were responsive to the levels of the different participants, offering enough advice to help us find an appropriate style and develop our understanding of how to perform the music. It also felt like we were probably only touching the surface of the knowledge the tutors had offer (so plenty of reason to attend future courses). Philip Thorby (the vocal tutor) was an inspiring director in the larger-scale music for choir and instruments, always drawing-out our best performance and enlightening us with his insights into the beauty and character of the music. Playing a solo violin line surrounded by the glorious sounds of a choir singing the beautiful music of a Salve Regina by Alessandro Scarlatti was a special experience, and one that will stay with me for a long time. This is, of course, not forgetting the luxury this course offered of being able to spend a week of the summer in the historic setting of a Cambridge college, with the chance to eat, drink and socialise with like-minded musicians. What's not to like?

Thanks again to Cambridge Early Music for creating and enabling me to attend such an inspiring and satisfying week of music-making.