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REVIEW

2015 BAROQUE & RENAISSANCE SUMMER SCHOOLS

ANASTASSIA (SOPRANO)

First of all, I would like to thank Cambridge Early Music for this opportunity, and for the amazing music-making I was part of for the two weeks that I was there!

The summer school was a wonderful experience for me. I am from South Africa, and at home I struggle to find people interested in playing early music with me. So it was especially nice to be surrounded by people who enjoy early music just as much, and maybe even more than me. I instantly felt a connection with each and every person there, and it was a wonderful feeling. The tutors are exceptionally knowledgeable and are full of enthusiasm about the music, which infects all participants, and that makes rehearsals exciting and engaging. A lot of the course participants are musicians, and that initially made me feel intimidated, because I do not have a degree in music. However, everybody there was so friendly and open that my worries disappeared after the first day there.

In the Baroque week we had regular choir rehearsals, daily evening rehearsals for Bach's B-minor Mass, and one chamber music session per day, where the tutors let us explore less-known and interesting pieces of music. For the chamber music sessions only a couple of players/singers were chosen for each piece, which made it almost a one-to-a-part setting. I really enjoyed those sessions; however, the sight-reading was at times quite challenging :) The course let me experience singing pieces I would never have come across otherwise, and I'm really happy I got to sing them. Another exciting part of the Baroque week (besides the formal concert at the end of the week) was the informal student concert the day before the final concert. Throughout the week, participants organised themselves into chamber groups - I was part of 4 groups or so - and practiced music they brought with them to the course. One of the pieces I was a part of was a 5-part a capella Renaissance madrigal brought by one of the basses in the choir. It was beautiful! I also did a duet with a fellow soprano - we sang a duet from Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro". As you can see, even though the week was focused on Baroque music, the student concert wasn't limited to pieces from the Baroque period. Some people told me afterwards that they enjoyed the variety of styles in the informal concert.

The Renaissance week was similar to the Baroque week; however, the structure was a little different. Renaissance pieces generally don't require big groups of players, so the course consisted mostly of chamber music sessions, with only one or two pieces that involved everybody. It was

delightful. Renaissance music is even closer to my heart than Baroque music, so I enjoyed every minute of it. The repertoire selection was related to a common theme - a wedding between the royal Medici couple, and it was very interesting to hear and sing some of the secular pieces. The informal concert was organised a little differently than in Baroque week. Since we were divided into a lot of chamber groups, we didn't get to hear the pieces other groups were doing during the week. So the informal concert let the tutors showcase all the various pieces different chamber groups worked on throughout the week, which was very enjoyable and interesting. The self-organised groups (like during the Baroque week) were also welcome to perform, and again I was a part of a chamber a capella group that did a beautiful Renaissance madrigal.

I am very grateful to the Cambridge Early Music organisers for awarding me a bursary to attend the course. Having flown from a faraway country into England, I had to pay extra fees for my flight ticket and, had it not been for the bursary from Cambridge Early Music, my budget might not have allowed for me to attend the course. And boy, would I have missed out! To anyone considering applying for a bursary, don't be discouraged. Apply early and let the organisers know how much it would mean to you to attend this amazing course, and I am sure they would be able to help :)

Dear organisers and tutors - thank you very much for one of the best holidays I've ever had!