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Derek, Baroque Viola and Violin.

Review of Cambridge Early Music Summer School 2019, Baroque Course.
Paris versus Versailles: Marc-Antoine Charpentier & his Court Rivals

This year, I attended the Cambridge Early Music baroque summer school for the third time – a testament to my having enjoyed it so much previously. The week-long course is becoming a regular fixture of my summer, and is always one of the highlights of my year. This year was no exception, and I am very thankful to the people at CEM for enabling me to take part again, with the generous support of a bursary. I highly recommend the summer school to anybody with an interest in discovering, performing, and learning about baroque music. As well as the pleasure of immersive music making with expert tutors and like-minded people, the facilities and beautiful surroundings at Girton College make for a really enjoyable week.

The theme of the course this year was French baroque music, in particular that of Marc-Antoine Charpentier in Paris, and of his rivals, from Jean-Baptiste Lully to François Couperin, who worked at the court of Versailles. French music of this period had developed its own very particular style. The course tutors did an excellent job of explaining the elements of this style and how to perform French music in *le bon goût*, including detailed instruction on how and when to use *notes inégales*, and when to add particular ornaments. By the end of the week, the sound of the choir and orchestra was transformed, and collectively there was a real confidence in how to present the music. It was great to receive such expert instruction in this area and it has given me knowledge I can now use when tackling similar repertoire in other projects.

One of the great plus points of this course is its inclusive nature. As in previous years, the tutors carefully considered the repertoire and groupings for the sessions, giving participants the chance to work with different people and with all the different tutors. The tutors were very responsive to the range of standards and experience of the different participants, offering tailored advice to help each of us find an appropriate style and develop our understanding of how to perform the music. As in previous courses, I'm grateful for the individual coaching in technique and

performance I received in a violin masterclass with Judy Tarling (violin and viola tutor), and I learnt much from watching and playing with others in the violin & viola class in the mornings. Philip Thorby (vocal tutor) was, once again, an inspiring director in the larger-scale music for choir and instruments, drawing-out our best performances and really getting behind the meaning and character of the music. My admiration also to Peter Holman (course director & continuo) for finding such interesting and neglected music for us to explore.

I first attended this summer school as a relative newcomer to baroque violin, but this year, now as a more experienced player, I really enjoyed playing with and sharing my enthusiasm with musicians who were discovering historically-informed performance practice for the first time. A first for me this year was playing mostly on baroque viola, an instrument I had started a few weeks before the course. The summer school offered a friendly environment to ease myself in to playing the new instrument and, after the final public concert, I had a real sense of achievement that I'd successfully made the switch from violin. It has given me the confidence that I can now go further with the instrument.

Each year the course has had a different feel - depending on the theme and the group of participants. However, each year I've found it friendly, engaging and equally rewarding. This year was particularly notable for the quality of the instrumentalists, especially the number of fine violinists; students, amateurs and professionals alike. It was also great to meet and play with people from across the world, from The United States to Malta to Malaysia, all sharing our enthusiasm for baroque music.

Finally, a personal musical highlight of this year's course was performing a solo violin line with the choir in Marc-Antoine Charpentier's beautiful *Litanies de la Vierge*. A musical memory I'll treasure. My thanks again for CEM for making it possible.

Derek, September 2019.