

## BBM Youth Support Award – Cinzia Posega

I flew into London on an icy, grey New Year's Eve. After stumbling, bleary-eyed, around Heathrow Airport for a few minutes (and thereby attracting concerned queries from airport security staff), I managed to haul my luggage in vaguely the right direction, and less than an hour later (although it could very well have been a few hours, or weeks – time has no meaning in the aftermath of a 24 hour flight), I stood transfixed by the sight of High Street, Kensington, in all its glittery, furcoated glory. The sky was inky – night had certainly fallen. It was 4.30 pm.

I discovered BBM Youth Support relatively recently, and was struck by their philosophy – it seemed almost too good to be true. In the last year or so, I had developed a keen interest in Baroque and Classical music, also working on my hand horn (natural horn) technique. I had performed in recitals and at the Sydney Baroque Music Festival, but knew that if I were to take my period instrument playing to the next level, I would need professional training. After meeting Anneke Scott respected freelance period horn player in London and Europe – when she was in Brisbane last year, and upon hearing her encyclopaedic knowledge of the period horn, and I knew I wanted to learn from her.

Before flying to London, I spoke to my teacher, Anneke, over Skype and had much email correspondence about lesson details, concerts and rehearsals that I could attend. It seemed I would be busy! It was especially beneficial to have the intensive period of lessons with one teacher, instead of visiting many teachers. I was in total admiration of the musical approach of Anneke at once technically meticulous and lyrical, with purity of sound and elegance of phrasing the highest priority. I felt as though my musical instincts became more refined and developed after every lesson. The combination of playing natural horn, an instrument which demands an utterly clear and complete aural conception of the desired musical result before one even picks up the instrument, and the stylistic knowledge of classical playing which I was learning, significantly elevated the standard of playing I expected of myself, both on modern horn and natural horn.

During the five weeks, I not only developed as a player, but was able to observe the life of a highly successful freelance musician, and the level of organisation that entails. As an aspiring professional, it was inspirational to see that, with dedication and consistent focus, a freelance career as a period horn player is not only possible, but highly rewarding.

Although I began as a relatively inexperienced natural horn player (in that all my training to date had been on modern horn), one of the things I loved most about my lessons was the way in which all aspects of new technique, such as right-hand position in the bell and tuning exercises were approached in a very musical way – my teacher would play in duet with me, allowing me to learn, in real time, about style appropriate tone, articulation and use of air.

I relished the wealth of information that was in seemingly inexhaustible supply throughout all my lessons. Period tuning was an aspect of much fascination. Classical horn players mostly play in pairs, and the writing for the instrument tends to be quite exposed. It is therefore imperative that one not only develops a highly refined sense of pitch, but also an awareness of 'just' intonation – the notion that the same interval may need to be adjusted up or down, depending on the key. With much practice (and hours with a tuning drone – sorry, anyone in the vicinity!), these concepts started to become *almost* second nature... and then the fun of playing real orchestral parts could begin.

It was an overwhelming experience to come to London, a city I'd never visited before, and find myself able to attend concerts and rehearsals on a weekly basis – almost all of which were of period music. I was lucky enough to see period chamber concerts – Boxwood and Brass gave a very memorable performance of the Mozart Horn Quintet, which I was studying. I also attended orchestral rehearsals of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and English Baroque Soloists, conducted by Sir John Eliot Gardiner.

I hadn't seen such large scale period instrument ensembles at work before, and it was a great learning experience to hear how adaptable and flexible they were within the ensemble, as well as how sensitive to each other's sounds they were. Wanting to absorb as much of the culture and history of England as I could, I took a day trip to Oxford, to see the Bate Collection, a display of historical instruments from the Renaissance onwards, which also held the MorleyPegg collection of many different incarnations of the horn – all the way through the evolution of the natural horn to the modern valved horn we play today.

An occasion I really felt thrust into the midst of horn history was when I attended an inaugural rehearsal of a Trompe de Chasse ensemble. This instrument is the great grandfather of the horn – originally an instrument used on horseback for hunting, this primal instrument poses a unique set of challenges to the modern player. In fact, there is a whole musical language peculiar to this world of playing, of which most of us were unaware. The leader of our ensemble informed us of the rigorous competitions held for 'sonneurs' (trompe players) in France. Traditionally, all players learned the competition hunting calls by ear, and their musical training required that they first learn to sing the pieces before they were permitted to play them.

Arranging ourselves into a traditional Vshape (among our number were exBBC Symphony horn players and a horn player of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment), we learned the authentic use of a wildsounding vibrato and the raucous upward inflections that signalled the beginnings of calls. Playing in a church in central London, the horn calls resounded mightily, and I was filled with disbelief and awe to be surrounded by such knowledgeable musicians who were thrilled by their instrument, in surroundings so beautiful and ancient. In a rare period where I had no rehearsals, lessons or concerts scheduled, I decided to take a short trip to Berlin – it seemed too great an opportunity to pass up.

During my somewhat whirlwind trip, I realised a longtime dream of seeing the Berlin Philharmonic. They played Mahler's Third Symphony, and of course it was mindblowing – I don't think I've ever witnessed such sheer electrifying joy from a group of musicians on stage before.

I am incredibly grateful to have received this BBM Youth Support Award. I feel that my playing, my perception of what's possible to achieve in music, and my outlook on being a professional musician, have all been hugely elevated and enriched as a result of my time overseas. I know that all aspects of my playing – both modern and classical hand horn – have improved greatly, and I have numerous new ideas which I can communicate to students, as well as implement in my daily practice. I hope to return to London in the near future for more study.