

I was extremely fortunate to have been awarded a Big Brother Scholarship in 2014. It provided me with an unforgettable four week experience, during which time I was immersed in the diverse musical cultures of London, Vienna, Berlin and Budapest. Furthermore, taking lessons from prominent teachers enabled me to broaden my horizons in relation to both cellistic and musical ideas. Through partaking in the rigorous audition process for the RCM, RAM and RNCM, I was challenged to push myself immensely in the preparation process. Subsequently being offered a full scholarship to the Royal College of Music was an incredible honour. As a result I will commence studies at the RCM in September 2015. I cannot thank the BBM Youth Support Foundation enough for not only providing me with a life changing experience, but for turning my aspirations of studying overseas into a reality.

Upon finishing my HSC in December 2014, I embarked on my journey. First stop was London to audition for the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music. Unfortunately due to previous commitments I arrived in London the afternoon before my first audition and had limited time to acclimatise. Mildly jetlagged I arrived at the RAM and presented my prepared repertoire, which consisted of Haydn's C major cello concerto and Ligeti's Sonata for solo cello. After the audition I was told to stay back for a second audition, which thankfully meant that I had played well. I was pleased, but the jet lag was kicking in, so I was very tired. The second round was in a lovely resonant auditorium in front of the head of Strings. After I had finished playing, I received valuable feedback and was offered a place and a generous scholarship.



Outside the Royal Albert Hall after



Belvedere palace, Vienna

The next day I auditioned for the RCM, which had an identical audition process consisting of two rounds. Once again I was invited to the second round and received positive feedback and was told that I was recommended for a scholarship. I was over the moon! The next few days consisted of practising for the audition at the Royal Northern College of Music while having the occasional break to sightsee. A refreshing walk to the Portabello Markets was a highlight. Arriving at Manchester I was so excited to get the chance to meet up with other Australian musicians who were studying there. Having had a few days to practise solidly I was quite happy with the way I played in the audition and was informed that I was being considered for a scholarship.

With the stress of the auditions over I was able to relax and partake in lessons. In particular, having a lesson with Melissa Phelps, a professor at the RCM, really opened my mind to aspects of playing the cello in regards to posture, that I needed to think about. Her valuable insights regarding how to approach the cello really opened up a minefield for me - and upon arriving back in Australia I was inspired to explore the avenue of cello posture further.

Next stop, Vienna. Although the stay was brief I was entranced by the beauty of the city and spent a few days walking along the cobblestoned streets, visiting sites, including the Christmas markets and Schonbrunn Palace. After arriving in Berlin I was privileged to receive a lesson from Peter Bruns, to whom I played Bach's prelude to the 6th suite in D major and Ligeti's solo cello sonata. Peter's sole emphasis on the communication of musical ideas, particularly in regards to articulation, helped me immensely in understanding how simplicity is just enough. Particularly his insights on phrasing and harmony took me in a new direction.



Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna



Bike riding in Budapest

Before arriving back in Sydney we spent a few days in Budapest, Hungary. The lively and dangerous environment was really refreshing and I was enlightened by the way in which playing an instrument was a natural part of many people's lives – regardless of profession. While practising in my uncle's flat I was interrupted by a next-door neighbour accompanied by his violin, asking if we could play through some violin and cello duets. We ended up playing in an impromptu house concert for his grandmother's birthday, which was a really joyous experience.

Now, a few months later and back in Australia, I cherish the memories I have of the four-week trip to Europe. Although naturally there were ups and downs, upon reflection, I feel that I was changed for the better both as a musician and a person. Experiencing a tiny portion of the classical music scene on an international scope justified to me that the music industry is very much alive and important, despite the widespread view that it is declining. Moreover I was able to see the tangible possibilities for my pursuit of a career in the music industry. I am so grateful to the Big Brother Movement for their generous support.