

SCOTTISH FREELANCERS ENSEMBLE

THE NEW ERA OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

SFE

SEPTEMBER
2020



PICTURE ABOVE:

Scottish Freelancers Ensemble performs our first socially distanced recording: Florence Price's 'Adoration', arranged for strings by Elaine Fine.

OUR STORY SO FAR

Welcome to our September Newsletter!

Over the past few weeks, we have seen the slow but sure modulation to crisp and cool autumn days, leaving summer behind us. Nature slowly morphs into a variety of beautiful golden ochre's; comforting russet leaves and earlier evenings tell us winter will be here again soon.

This month at the SFE office we have been busy planning ahead for our upcoming projects. We find ourselves on the cusp of tighter restrictions, yet we have been pleased to see the cathartic return to work for some of our members. Despite this, performance opportunities are still few and far between, and most musicians are still waiting for their opportunity to make music together.

The longer the silence, the more determined we are to make a difference through SFE, and your continued support inspires us to keep moving forward.

We are excited to introduce to you the SFE Spotlight interviews - a monthly catch-up with one of our musicians. We discuss a wide range of topics, from what music means to the player, their career highlights, and their lockdown experience. Furthermore, we are delighted to present our second SFE Focus, written by Dr Aaron McGregor. This month we learn about the life of the virtuoso Maddalena Sirmen Lombardini, whose duet and trio you heard in last month's SFE Virtual Concert.

The next few months will see us working together with SFE member, multi-talented vocalist, arranger, composer and broadcaster, Seonaid Aitken. She will be bringing you a stunning new Jazz arrangement, exclusively for SFE! Not only that, but thanks to the success of our most recent virtual concert, we will be bringing you more remotely recorded performances in the coming months, featuring all of our wonderful musicians. Not to be missed! Our mission at Scottish Freelancers Ensemble is to support the freelance orchestral string players of Scotland, and to serve as a

unanimous voice for that community. We will continue to raise funds by creating necessary and relevant content and, through our digital concerts, we aim to reach a broader audience base. We ask you to please like, comment, share, and subscribe across our social media platforms. It is you, our supporters who are making all of this possible - thank you for being part of this journey!

We are delighted to present this month's newsletter and hope you will enjoy reading as much as we enjoyed creating. Thank you!

Scottish Freelancers Ensemble

"We hope that by raising awareness of our current circumstances, this project will help to amplify our voices as a freelance community so that ultimately, we can begin to share music again."

SFE co-founder and violinist Katrina Lee

GLASGOW TIMES ARTICLE

TWO Glaswegian musicians have brought together some of Scotland's best freelance musicians to create the 'world's first zero carbon footprint' orchestra.

Created by Katrina Lee and Alice Allen, both 28, the Scottish Freelancers Ensemble have been creating online orchestral performances, with the first going live last month.

Katrina said: "The idea of the orchestra came about because freelancers weren't able to have that normal musician community in live spaces because of COVID and lockdown.

"The orchestra is a way to replicate the community and replicate that feeling again, but with everyone playing in their own home." The Scottish Freelancers Ensemble posted their first video, a performance of Adoration by African-American composer Florence Price, on July 22, with Katrina saying that the significance of this songs is engrained in the group's ethos.

She said: "We chose that piece by Florence Price, the first African-American composer to have her work performed, because it was around the time of the Black Lives Matter protests across the world and it has always been a part of our ethos to champion under-represented minorities in the industry.

"We are hoping to get three ethnically diverse composers to work with in the future, and we are very keen on paying our artists.

"That's why with this next performance, we are hoping that we can encourage some donations which will allow us to pay our artists."

The next performance will be an hour-long concert next Wednesday, and will take place online at sfe.scot and on the group's YouTube page.

"In the 30+ orchestra members that we have, we probably have over 100 years of experience.

"Freelancers have been in a really difficult situation the past few months, this is a way of giving them that community again."

To donate to the Scottish Freelancers Orchestra donation page, you can visit their GoFundMe campaign through their website.

We are a community of freelance orchestral musicians living and working in Scotland, whose members perform variously for every professional orchestra and classical ensemble in the country. Like others suffering during the coronavirus pandemic, our individual sources of income almost entirely disappeared overnight. Collectively we have noticed the lack of organised support for freelance musicians.

This project will both function as a support network and a creative outlet for Scotland's wonderful network of freelance classical musicians. Initially we will share our music through virtual platforms, with the intention of undertaking physical performances as Covid-19 guidelines are eased. Our first socially-distanced video recording (premiered on 22 July 2020) features a 36-piece string ensemble, performing 'Adoration' by African-American composer Florence Price, arranged for strings by Elaine Fine. We are also delighted to have been joined by celebrated guest musicians violinists Ilya Gringolts and Tobias Ringborg, and cellist Jonathan Tunnell.

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- **£3,354 RAISED ON GOFUNDME**
- **17 MONTHLY PATREONS**
- **2.4K VIEWS ON OUR FIRST YOUTUBE VIDEO 'ADORATION'**
- **1K VIEWS ON OUR YOUTUBE SFE VIRTUAL CHAMBER CONCERT**
- **INTERVIEW ON CLASSICS UNWRAPPED WITH JAMIE MACDOUGALL**

MEET THE MUSICIANS



The most unique venue I have performed in was Fingal's Cave on the Isle of Staffa!



Swimming in Lochs all year round makes me very happy!



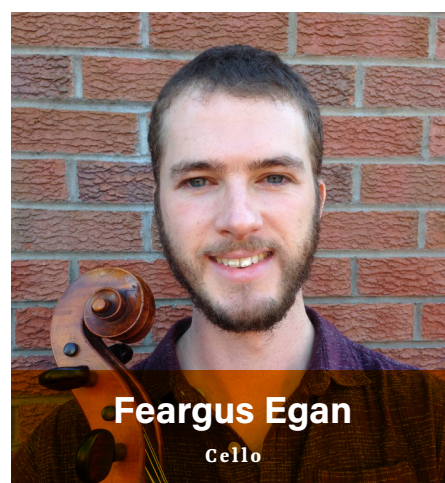
Hidden talent: super good at catching flies with my hands.



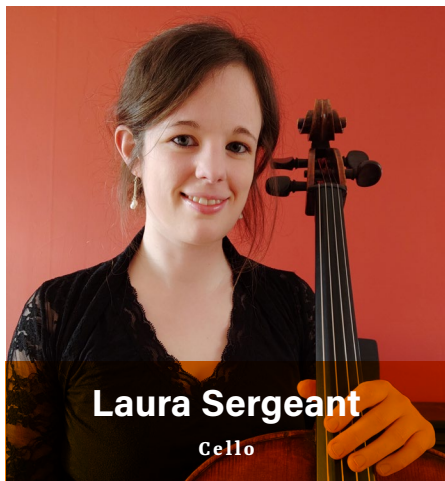
I think I have an eye for a bargain: if I see an antique shop I will just have to go in and rummage around!



Emma is one of the SFE viola players, and in normal times she enjoys playing in a variety of different ensembles and orchestras and belting out some Kate Bush at karaoke.



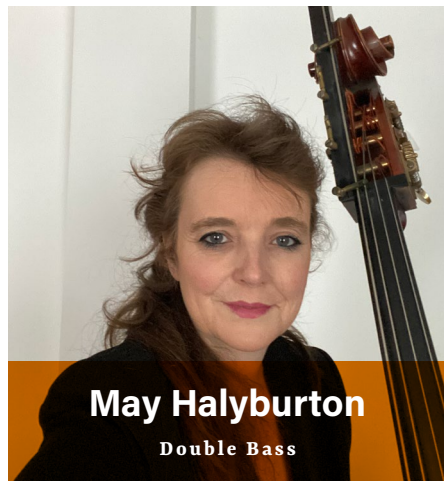
I have a musical face - adopting a shape that resembles Edvard Munch's "The Scream", my face becomes a very effective tuned-percussion instrument. My repertoire is expanding, and I reckon I'll be ready to take my Grade 4 face-slapping exam soon.



Laura Sergeant

Cello

When not playing the cello Laura is often found waging war against the slugs in her garden.



May Halyburton

Double Bass

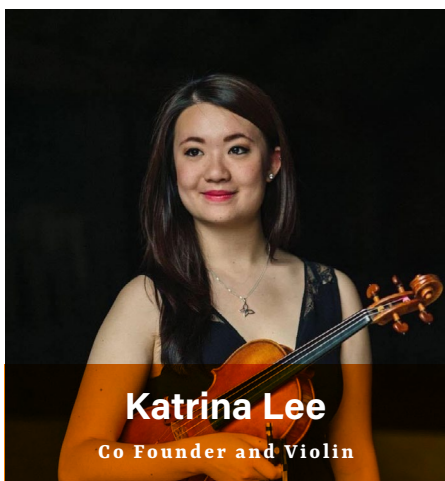
Dolly Parton inspired me to publish my children's books!



Maggie Montgomery

Viola

Apparently I make the world's best macaroni cheese!



Katrina Lee

Co Founder and Violin

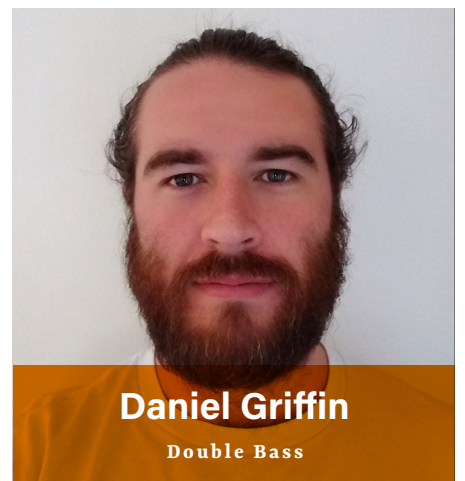
Frying eggs with chopsticks is one of my lesser known talents



Alice Allen

Co Founder and Cello

Dedicated crisp connoisseur and vegetarian bacon fry critic.



Daniel Griffin

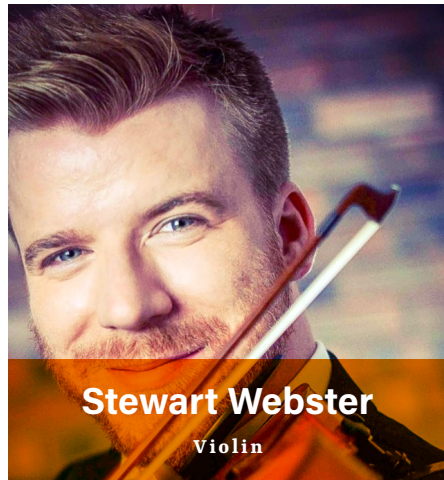
Double Bass

I appeared on a Rude Tube Christmas special in 2012 after a video I uploaded to YouTube of an explicit snow sculpture went viral topping 3.5 million views around the world.

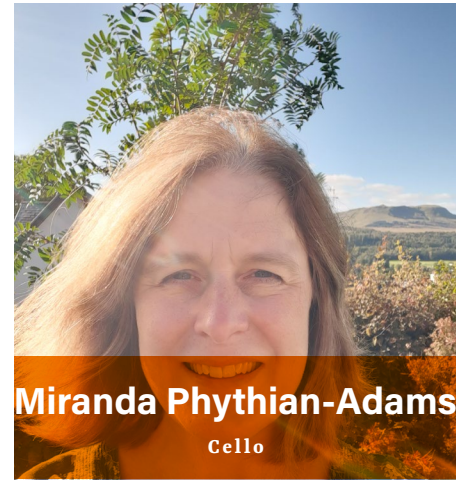
MEET THE MUSICIANS



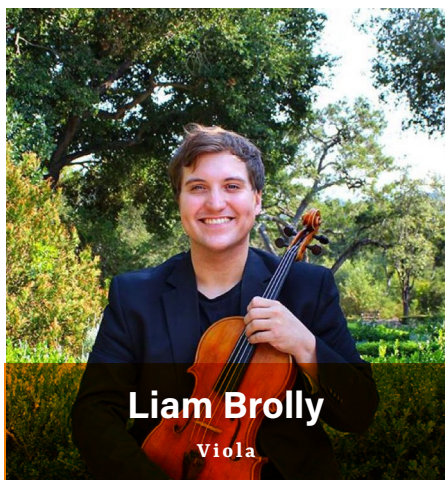
I attempted to make Dalek-shaped shortbread during lockdown but managed to “exterminate” them within minutes at the entirely wrong oven temperature.



I was once bitten by a shrew which led to me having to repeat an entire year of high school.



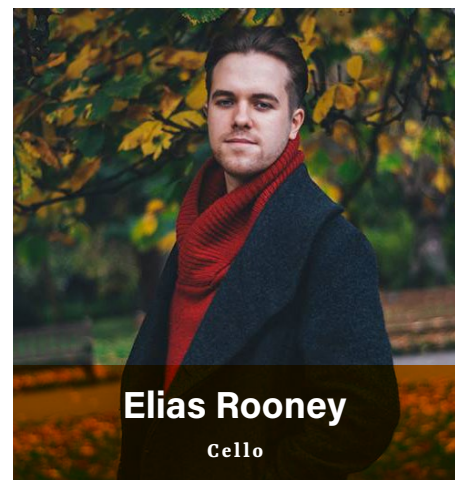
I sell paintings to boost my income.



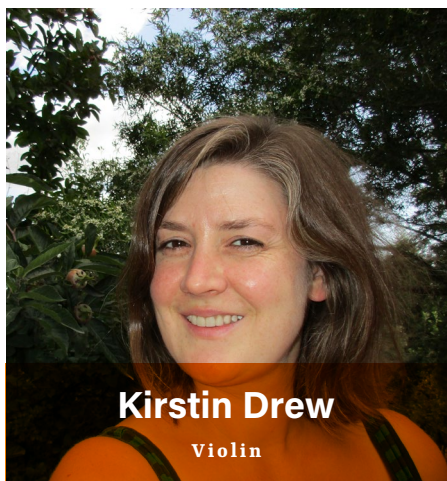
Sausage Supper Pilgrim.



I could happily eat pasta for breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Enjoys cooking and baking. During lockdown I have learned how to make ornate meringues and very cleanly iced cakes with sharp edges. All for me.



As a child I was a Dr Mario champion.



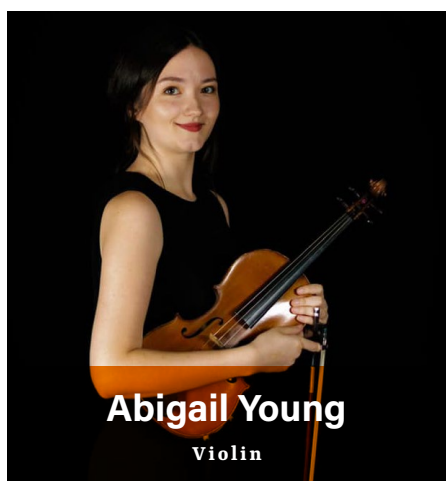
At Primary School I won prizes for reciting Robert Burns poems. Not sure if those skills have lasted the test of time!



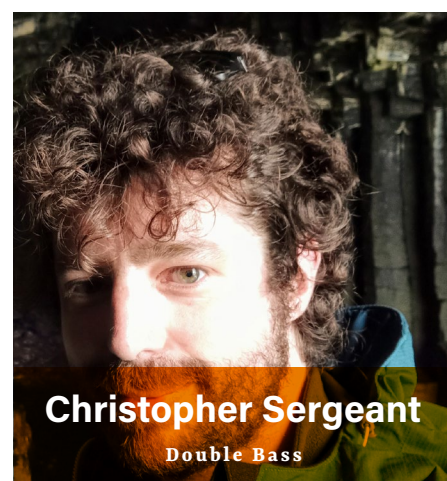
I love knitting teddies and baking sourdough rye bread. Naughty!



When I retire I want to sail around the world.

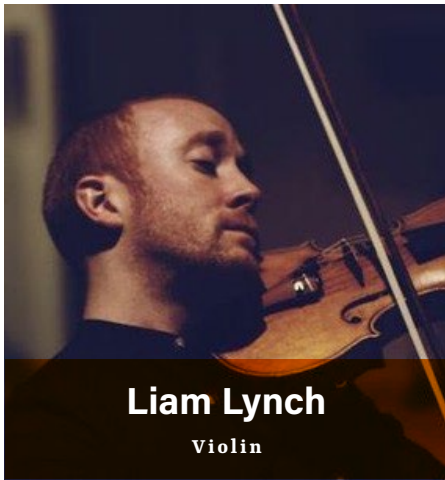


Not many people know that I also play the Baroque recorder... when it was time to leave school I had to choose between studying recorder or violin at music college. Violin came out on top!



I have 7 double basses in my 2 bed flat.

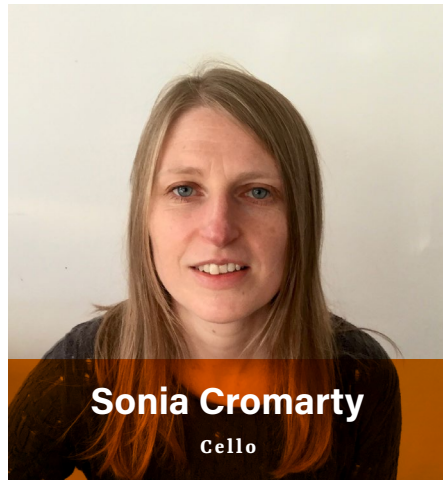
MEET THE MUSICIANS



Liam Lynch

Violin

I am an unparalleled parallel parker.



Sonia Cromarty

Cello

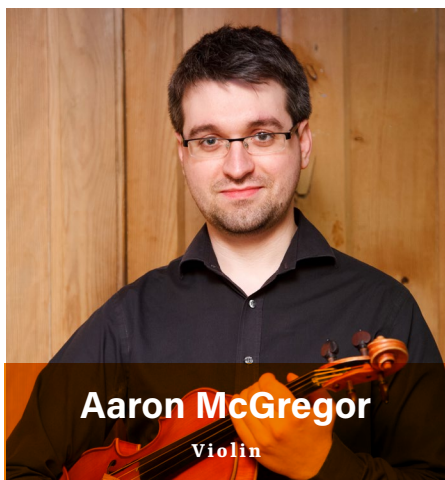
I've played on a ship in the Arctic!



Emma Pantel

Violin

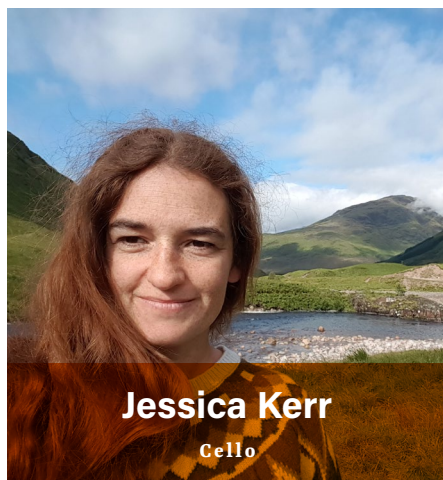
I am bi-lingual in French and English and love making pavlovas.



Aaron McGregor

Violin

I have designed and illustrated my own card horse-race based card game called "Hurdles", which has been played by upwards of 7 people.



Jessica Kerr

Cello

The baking cellist.



Charlotte Penketh

Viola

In my free time, I love making my own clothes.

SFE FOCUS

MADDALENA LOMBARDINI SIRMEN



Researcher and SFE violinist Aaron McGregor explores the life and work of 18th-century violinist-composer Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen (1745-1818).

I would be interested to know how many individuals working in classical music today studied work by female composers when growing up. I certainly remember playing contemporary music by women, but honestly throughout my time at high school and as an undergraduate, I don't recall the curriculum including a single work by female composers from before the 20th century. We have to recognise that many of the problems of representation in classical music today are a result of our education: not only have women and people of colour traditionally been left out of "histories of classical music", but we also rarely explore the question of why there were fewer voices from these groups, and why their work didn't make its way into the classical canon.

One way that prejudice against female composers was manifested was through work. Women had far fewer opportunities to work within those musical professions which most commonly included composition. In the 18th century, there were certainly lots of female musicians who became professional singers and music teachers, but it was exceptionally rare for women to work as solo instrumentalists, to become directors of music at court, at church, in theatre, or in orchestras, or even to find work as rank-and-file instrumentalists.



SFE FOCUS CONTINUED

MADDALENA LOMBARDINI SIRMEN



A rare exception was Maddelena Lombardini, whose multi-faceted musical career included work as an international touring solo violinist, a widely published and celebrated composer, and latterly as a singer in opera houses across Europe. Clearly Lombardini's success was in large part due to her talent, drive, and business acumen, but it's also worth noting the exceptional circumstances which gave her a foothold in a male-dominated industry.

Lombardini was born into a noble yet poor Venetian family, and in 1753 was accepted to study at the Ospedale dei Mendicanti. This was one of a network of music schools in Venice which started life as orphanages for young girls, but by Lombardini's time offered a musical education to girls from impoverished backgrounds. By the middle of the 18th century, the schools were famed for their performances. The girls received an impressively wide-ranging musical education not commonly offered to young women, including not only singing, but composition and performance on orchestral instruments. The Ospedali attracted some of the best musicians as their tutors and maestro di capelli: most famously, Antonio Vivaldi worked at another of the Ospedali (the Pièta) earlier in the century, and Lombardini almost certainly would have studied composition under the maestro at the Mendicanti, the opera composer Ferdinando Bertoni (1725-1813).

In 1760, Lombardini was accepted as one of the pupils of the superstar violinist and famed teacher Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770). Before the lessons began, Tartini sent Maddalena a letter as an introductory guide to his practice. It was translated and published by Charles Burney in 1770 and has become a key document of 18th-century teaching and performance practice. Tartini's principal direction was to practise sustained notes on open strings for an hour a day, along with playing the fast movements from Corelli's sonatas for agility, and regular exercise of the quintessential 18th-century ornament 'the shake' (i.e. the trill). No doubt Tartini's lessons in person would have focussed more on the rhetorical aspects of performance, the ways of presenting 'affect' or emotional states through music, with composition and performance forming a spectrum of musical activity.

Lombardini married the violinist Luduvico Sirmen in 1767, and the following year the pair undertook an international tour with resounding success. One attendee at their performance in the Concert Spirituel in Paris noted of Maddalena's playing that "we found truthfulness, purity, and graciousness in her playing [...] this virtuosa equals if not surpasses the great masters". In 1771 Maddalena settled in London by herself, enjoying three years performing at concerts and theatres, including taking part in the famed concert series organised by J.C. Bach and the cellist / gamba player C.F. Abel.

All of Lombardini's printed works were published at the height of her fame as a violinist in 1769-1773, when she was aged between 24 and 28. Her published works all centre around the violin, including six each of string quartets, string trios, violin duos, and violin concerti. A sign of Lombardini's success is how widely her music was published, including by the best-known publishers in London, Paris, Amsterdam, The Hague, Leipzig, and Vienna. Her works continued to be republished over a period lasting some 60 years, and were also meticulously hand-copied, with some 81 manuscript copies surviving in libraries around the world. Her music was also performed by other violinists, in concerts from Salzburg to Stockholm.

Stylistically, Lombardini's output falls in that period of experimentation between late baroque and early classical. Her chamber works are almost all in two movements, most often an opening movement in an embryonic sonata form, followed by a rondo or minuet (or often a combination of the two). Lombardini's best works are probably the string quartets, which bring together the poise and elegance of early classical style together with a real sense of experimentation. The opening movements are episodic in structure, with lots of contrast between light and shade: boisterous unisons give way to quasi-fugal passages, falling into sections of searching modulations and lyricism. There is also a real sense of these being true quartets, with often an equal importance between parts, and regular dialogue between voices.

The six violin concerti were no doubt written to showcase Lombardini's own playing, yet whilst there is virtuosity, there is little sense of empty display in these works. The concerti are scored for an orchestra of 2 oboes, 2 horns, and strings, with the solo sections usually accompanied by violins. Each concerto is in three movements, with the opening movements blending the ritornello form of the baroque concerto with an early sonata-like form. Perhaps most effective are the slow movements, with their combination of sparse texture and lyrical pathos in the solo part.

After the creative burst of Lombardini's early published work, unfortunately she seems to have given up composition, or at least stopped publishing her works. After becoming estranged from Luduvico in the early 1770s, Lombardini concentrated her efforts on a career as an opera singer, only occasionally playing the violin while she worked as the prima donna in opera houses across Italy, France, Germany, and Russia.

Movements from Lombardini's duets and string trios can be heard in SFE's first virtual concert, premiered on 26 August 2020:

<https://youtu.be/WWWh4C7gsO5U>

Aaron McGregor
27 September 2020

SFE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEWS

LIAM BROLLY



For the first Spotlight interview Alice and Katrina chat informally with our members to bring you a personal insight into the world of the freelance musician; this month we are delighted to introduce to you Violist Liam Brolly. Originally from Glasgow, Liam is a recent graduate from the extremely prestigious Colburn School in Los Angeles. In Scotland, Liam has freelanced with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and has appeared as Guest Principal Viola with the RSNO. Today, he joins Alice and I online from Washington D.C for a chat reflecting upon his time during lockdown and his career in music as a freelance musician during these times.

SFE - Hi Liam! Thank you SO much for talking to us today - it's nice that we can catch up easily even though you're so far away! Why don't we kick off by asking you to tell us a bit about yourself and what you do?

Hello! Thanks for inviting me, its my first time doing something like this so you should probably edit absolutely everything I say.. I suppose the only thing to tell you is that I'm a Viola player and have a big birthday coming up, so I'll have been playing for over 20 years!

SFE - As Alice's grandad would say - 'you still don't know how to play that thing yet?!'

Well I'm still practicing my C Major scales, so take from that what you will..As you say, I'm from Glasgow. Although I was told recently I have a weird accent! It was a very upsetting experience.

SFE - It's interesting that your accent was brought up, why do you think that is?

I think it's because I studied in London from the age of 17. I felt like a bit of an outsider so I must have unwittingly softened my accent to fit in - not that I had a particularly thick accent to begin with. Thinking about it though, there aren't many professional players from Glasgow. Scotland is a very musical place, and although we value the arts, I don't think we're quite there yet in terms of access. I don't regret moving away for my stints in higher education. I think coming from a small place, it's important to leave and see what's going on elsewhere. If anything it just broadens your perspective - both Alice and I left to study in England and of course [Katrina] you're from Yorkshire so you left too to try and further your playing. I think it's really important for us as artists. For me, that meant really, REALLY going away to America. The U.S.A stood out as the absolute pinnacle of string playing for me. I was looking for a truly international level of playing to learn from and be a part of, and I found that at Colburn. I feel lucky to have been a part of that community for three years.

SFE - With that perspective and having left so much behind to pursue something relatively unknown, how do you feel? There aren't many professions in which, by the time they're 30, someone can say they've been honing their craft for over 20 years!

Exactly, it's a huge commitment to be a musician and we really have to enjoy the learning process. I was speaking with a friend in Los Angeles who described himself as a 'lifelong learner' - it was a term I hadn't heard before, but really resonated with me. Music seems to have that effect on people, even outside of the profession. For instance, I've seen a lot of my old friends from 'Band Camp' go on to have careers in fields where continual learning is extremely important such as medicine and law. I think music can have that effect on anyone and really cultivates that urge to keep bettering yourself and your surroundings.

SFE - Arguably in a musical career, the driving force is not one of financial incentive. Would you say there is a common characteristic among people who choose this type of career?

I'm definitely a nurture over nature kind of person and I think that learning music and being around it nurtures a kind of need for exploration - because we play the same pieces over and over again but we're always trying to find something new. And you're always guaranteed to find something new because you're never playing with the same people, instruments, halls - so everything about that musical eco system creates this need to keep looking and searching. For me, I've always been motivated by what I enjoy and that just happens to be playing and teaching music. Hopefully, I can continue to do it for a wee bit longer!

SFE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEWS CONTINUED.

LIAM BROLLY

SFE – Having said that, what do you see for the future of music given our current circumstances?

I think that's really important and something we need to keep talking about. I've been thinking about a post I saw from the New York Philharmonic; they talked about how the orchestra had survived the Spanish Flu of 1918 and would survive this too. I think they are right, we will survive this one and there is no reason for music not to come back fully. I also just can't imagine doing anything else. It is really tough right now though, and I'm keeping in touch with as many people as possible to keep my spirits up. I think this will just be a dip in our lives - perhaps a longer dip than we anticipated - but I'm confident it won't be the end of the music industry.... So keep practicing!

SFE – What are you most looking forward to playing when you get the chance? You can be greedy, pick as many as you like!

The last project I played before lockdowns took effect was with the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. That was a bit of a dream come true for me, playing with one of the greatest orchestras in the world, with one of the greatest conductors in the world. It'd be a good way to go out if that WAS my last ever orchestra concert but yes, I think I want to get in and make a big collective sound. There's nothing more satisfying than sitting in that sound world. It's just amazing. I'd jump into an orchestra performance in a heartbeat...offstage viola number 16...

SFE - So, just before we wrap things up, you go back a long way with SFE's Co-Founders Alice and Katrina, tell us about your favourite memory of working with them.

I'm really proud of starting up the Brodick Quartet. I think playing with you two in that group was the first chamber experience where I felt completely welcome and where all my opinions were heard and mattered. I think we bounced off each other really well and it was a collective experience in the true sense of the word. I think it was the first and the last time I've had that. I love playing chamber music, but it's rare that you get a group that feels completely equal so that has to be my favourite memory. And now you've gone and set up an ensemble with a mission that is really necessary for music today. It's so great being a part of it and re-connecting with the wonderful, supportive musical community in Scotland!

SCOTTISH

SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to extend a special thanks to our current sponsor through both Gofundme and Patreon accounts.



£3,374 raised of £7,500 goal

109 donors **285** shares **109** followers



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FREELANCERS ENSEMBLE

The logo consists of the letters 'SFE' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'S' and 'E' are white, while the 'F' is orange. The logo is centered within a black square, which is itself centered on a larger orange background.

SFE