



## British Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Report from:

Lowri Preston - Scholarship 2009



Studying in Germany at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Dusseldorf has given me the very best opportunity to fulfil my ambition of becoming an orchestral musician: the two-year Masters course, known as 'Orchesterspiel', is unique and inspiring, as is my tutor, Gregor Horsch, Solo Cellist of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw.

The graduate programme I have undertaken aims to connect its students to the 'real world' of the music profession in a dynamic way by regularly inviting conductors, soloists and section leaders from the European orchestral circuit to share their expertise. Although the choice of principal teacher is fundamental to the learning process, it is always constructive to receive tuition from other musicians: in this way students are regularly exposed to new views and interpretations. One of the main features of the course is a regular mock audition, for which students are expected to prepare repertoire and orchestral excerpts to a professional standard. This is a great opportunity, not only for ensuring one's playing is of a high standard, but also for preparing oneself psychologically for future job auditions and interviews. I was privileged enough, two weeks into the Semester, to receive an individual lesson from the Solo Cellist of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Ludwig Quantz. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and look forward to forthcoming lessons from other high profile cellists.

Another important, and often neglected, aspect of becoming a musician is the psychology of performance. The course offers students classes in performance coaching, mental training and relaxation techniques, allowing them to work on the mental preparation which is essential for achieving a position in an orchestra.

Of course, high quality orchestral performance is the basis of my work. During the four semesters students are obliged to take part in a variety of orchestral projects with experienced and well-known conductors. We are expected to respond quickly under pressure, thus giving us the chance to experience professional rehearsal conditions. I particularly enjoyed the 'repertoire days' at the beginning of the Semester, a chance for the orchestra to work on some of the most difficult excerpts available but not in a daunting and negative way. It was a good opportunity to work intensively on specific sections of music, and everyone was very supportive of one another. I'm looking forward greatly to working on my first main orchestral project in February, playing great works such as Brahms Symphony No.4 in the Konzerthaus in Dortmund. Another exciting opportunity for students of the Orchesterzentrum is a chance to work closely with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in a 'side by side' scheme, allowing students to further their professional experience.

I am truly grateful to the British Chamber of Commerce in Germany Foundation for their support this year: a time in which my respect for German life and culture has only increased. I am looking forward to continuing my studies in Germany, to becoming fluent in its language and even more deeply immersed in its music.

Lowri Preston