



London Debut

I wrote last week about the jam I had got myself into less than one week after leaving home to go and live in England. Although I had successfully found a place to stay, I had rather foolishly spent the rest of my meagre bankroll on a new flute, and was now faced with a problem - the rent for my room would be due in a couple of days, and I was unable to pay it.

I also had not the slightest idea about how to get started on moving towards my goal of becoming a professional flute player.

Was it time to telephone my father's friend and ask for some assistance? But what an awful thing to do after less than one week - confess 'defeat' and look for help! No, I certainly wasn't ready to do that ... not yet, anyway!

On one of my walks around the city that week I had visited an area called the 'South Bank', a development of concert halls and galleries, and had seen on posters that there were orchestra concerts held nearly every night there. This gave me an idea ...

What was I thinking, that I could join one of the orchestras? No, of course not. I knew that I couldn't get in the hall to play, but what about outside it? Early one evening I took my flute and headed over there to give it a try. There was a wide concrete plaza at the front of the building facing the Thames river, and adjacent to this was a pedestrian bridge across which concert patrons were making their way towards the hall, coming from the large train station across the river. It looked good ...

I found an appropriate spot on the plaza with my back to the wall of the concert hall, took out my flute, and placed the case open on the ground in front of me. I chose a little 'showpiece' that I had learned, full of glittering runs and arpeggios, one that I thought would catch the attention of the people walking by.

When all was ready, I began to play. The sound that came out of my flute was glorious! Perhaps it was all that concrete for reflection ... perhaps it was the buildings across the river ... I have no idea what caused it, but every note seemed to hang in the air and carry for miles. I had never sounded so good!

Many of the people walking by stopped and listened for a while before moving on to enter the hall. These were classical music fans, after all, and (so I told myself) they knew good playing when they heard it! My *étude* was accompanied by a constant tinkle of money being tossed into my flute case, the sound gradually changing tone as the pile of coins grew and grew. As the piece came to an end, I smoothly began another one, and kept playing until the stream of people tapered off as the concert inside the hall got underway. My 'debut' concert was over.

I stared at my flute case in absolute amazement - I could barely see it under the pile of money. Most of the contributions were coins of course, but there was also paper money, plenty of it. I was completely unprepared for this, and had no bag of any kind with me. I stuffed coins into every pocket of every piece of clothing I was wearing, and then headed slowly home, jingling at every step.

For the immediate future at least, my problems seemed to be solved - I had a way to pay the rent, and a way to get some good flute practice time!

And although I didn't know it that day, this busking 'job' outside one of London's major concert halls would actually lead to one of those real jobs inside - on stage front and centre!

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