

Suburb Style



Suburb Style editor, Deborah Warland talks to local residents



SUBURB MUSIC PRODIGY featuring Pierre-Emmanuel LARGERON

I must say that I had never met anyone who has said to me, "I expressed the desire to play violin from the age of two." From someone else this might have sounded precocious but not from Pierre-Emmanuel LARGERON, the 21 year old who was born in Provence and when only three began violin lessons at the Vivaldi Academy in Grenoble. He has been performing in international concert halls since the age of five, particularly in Japan, France and the UK.

I asked Pierre whether he came from a musical family. "No, apart from enjoying opera and classical music generally, they weren't particularly musical, although my grandfather played the violin as an amateur and my grandmother the piano. Perhaps I inherited my musical genes from them. Unfortunately they died long before I was born but I know that they held a light 'salon' every month inviting friends to attend performances."

His first public concert – at the age of 5 – was with Masayuki Kino, the Concertmaster of the Japanese Philharmonic Orchestra and I asked him whether he experienced nerves then or since. "Well, I'd say it's because I started so early that it always felt natural to me to play for an audience. Even now, I don't feel any kind of bad stage fright. In my mind the performance should be a pleasure for both the public and the musicians."

After receiving the top prize in many national competitions, Pierre enjoyed master classes with, amongst others, Itzhak Perlman and when only 18, he was accepted at Post Graduate level to the Royal Academy of Music. Why London? I asked him. "The Academy is one of the finest institutions in terms of music-making and teaching and I was eager to have the opportunity to be taught by Professor Maurice Hason who has now brought me so much knowledge musically as well as learning from him about humanity."

In 2011 Pierre was awarded the Ambassadorial Scholarship from the Rotary International as well as the title, 'Ambassador of Goodwill'. The scholarship, which was founded in 1947, helps young people to compete their studies and to share common values of service, peace and understanding which they can integrate into their lives and work. To date it has assisted over 41,000 young people with their education. As an Ambassador he acts as a bridge between those who are in need of help and Rotary International.

now living with Diana and Gerald Darrer in Central Square. (I must say that if this had been my first experience of the Suburb you would never have been able to prise me away – perfect place, perfect hosts!) He says that the Darrers 'have welcomed me with the warmth of my own family' and he is also indebted to Brian and Jenny Stonhold for showing him the Suburb ropes and becoming such close friends.

I went on to ask Pierre how much time he spends here among us. "Being a musician implies travelling, so I spend a certain amount of time in trains, airplanes and taxis. One of my plans for 2013 includes a concert tour in Asia (Japan, Taiwan and Singapore, notably with acclaimed Singaporean Abigail Sin). What with commitments in France as well, I suppose I spend about 8 months here and the rest overseas – I'm working on my PhD in the UK and that is a priority."

As for his favourite destinations for performing – "London is an attractive place for performers because of its highly knowledgeable public and with so many events being held on a daily basis. It is an international spot for culture and particularly music. I have enjoyed discovering the Japanese culture through concerts in Japan – one can learn so much about a country by playing to its people. I have also experienced the gloss of New York and its audience – accustomed to any fantasy but also aware of the qualities of a good artist."

Alongside his classical career Pierre also plays pop, folk and jazz. I asked the obvious laymans question – did he enjoy these performances as much as playing one of the greatest pieces by, for example, Beethoven or Mozart? "I equally enjoy moments spent with the 3 Bs (Bach, Beethoven, Brahms) and with, say, the Beatles. In my mind, musical genres are not to be separated from one another. Like its history, music is a continuous flow of inventions, improvements, improvisations and influences."

I went on to ask Pierre more about his feelings for the Suburb and why he feels so much at home here. He answered, "There is a small verse taken from the poem *Invitation au Voyage* by Charles Baudelaire that says 'La, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté: Luxe, calme et volupté', which is usually clumsily translated, 'There all is order, naught amiss: Comfort and beauty, calm and bliss'. This is my ideal definition of the Suburb and its residents – this is what makes me want to stay here for a long time!"

We have been very fortunate that Pierre has played on the Suburb – at the St Jude's Proms, Fellowship House and the Free Church – and in true musical tradition he said that were he to have a memorial bench it should be shaped like a violin, erected in his favourite Suburb season, Spring. It would be positioned on Sandy Heath forest on the Spaniards Road side where there is some neo-antique architecture and gardens which, for Pierre, evokes Debussy's music.

Let us hope that Pierre-Emmanuel continues to stay with us on the Suburb for many years to come. **S**

Pierre-Emmanuel LARGERON

Pierre came to live on the Suburb through mutual friends in France and a recommendation from a former Suburb resident, Agnes Crompton-Roberts. He is

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Pierre-Emmanuel takes a break