

Music



Ruth Rogers in Plymouth (interview)

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Asked to name three leading young UK violinists, it's doubtful whether Ruth Rogers would be on the tip of your tongue.

Ask the same question along the south coast, and Ruth would quite possibly head the list, since she is now co-leader of the Dorset-based Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO), no mean achievement by the ripe old age of thirty.

I caught up with Ruth at Plymouth Pavilions where she was leading the orchestra, and asked her whether she was enjoying working with the BSO.

"It's a fantastic orchestra," she said, "and getting better all the time, I think. I've high hopes for its future and am really like working with them."

Did she prefer to play alongside a well-established leader, or lead herself?

"I enjoy both leading and co-leading. As leader I like the challenge of having to be diplomatic, sensitive, assertive and demonstrative, whereas as a co-leader I can learn from a more experienced musician and enjoy my playing without quite as much responsibility.

"I suppose it must be a bit like a plane's co-pilot – great to feel part of the action, but more able to appreciate the views when not actually flying it yourself!"

The leader always gets to make their separate entrance, but what else do they do?

"They have a number of roles," Ruth explained. "As leader of the violins, there are extra responsibilities like sorting out bowings, and being demonstrative in a way that will help the orchestra to play as one.

"Another is acting as spokesperson for the orchestra, whilst remaining an ally to the conductor.

"Also, the leader has to tune up the orchestra and check that rehearsals start and finish on time, ensuring that any break comes at the right time in accordance with Union regulations.

“They will also be involved in appointing other members of the orchestra, hearing auditions, liaising with management and dealing with concerns and queries from other players.”

It sounds like a full-on nine-to-five job, but Ruth, like many of her colleagues, manages to combine all this with a parallel career as soloist and chamber musician.

With pianist Martin Cousin, Ruth recently reached the final of the Franz Schubert and Modern Music International Competition which took place in Graz, Austria, where they were one of five duos in the final, chosen from the initial thirty-seven participants.

Ruth also leads the Luventus String Quartet which she founded back in 2003, and only this March, together with her quartet-cellist, Katherine Jenkinson, formed an exciting new partnership with Martin Cousin, the Aquinas Piano Trio, *pictured right*, which has already been chosen as a featured ensemble in the Concert Promoters' Network Scheme.

They have also just released a superb debut CD, featuring piano trios by Ravel and Saint-Saëns.

Ruth has fortunately been kept very busy, but it was interesting to know whether the current recession had made any difference.

“Well, touch wood (and I've got a very large wooden kitchen table at home!) I haven't been affected yet,” Ruth replied.

“There may be a knock-on effect in the future, I suppose, but many people say they will still go along to concerts, especially if they need cheering up in these depressing times – I hope that's true!”

Ruth has already made two appearances in previous Plymouth Chamber Music Trust Concerts, but she returns to the series, this time with the Aquinas Piano Trio, on Saturday, October 24 at 7.30pm in the Sherwell Centre.

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