

Rebecca Hopper – Canada with Cambridge Wind Orchestra, Summer 2018

This summer I was lucky enough to be able to travel to Canada with the Cambridge University Wind Orchestra. Following our previous tours to Belgium and Germany we wanted to travel further afield in celebration of our 30th anniversary, making us the first CUMS ensemble to cross the Atlantic.

We brought a wide repertoire of music, including Ellerby's Paris Sketches, Whitacre's Ghost Train and an arrangement of Danzon No. 2 for wind orchestra. We were also able to perform The Lochnager Suite by Nigel Hess, who came to Cambridge to lead a rehearsal for us in preparation for our anniversary concert last May. During our time in Canada, we had 5 concerts in Montreal, Quebec City and Ottawa. This gave us time to explore each of these cities, and to learn a bit about their culture and the history of Canada. This was especially the case in Quebec City, where we were given a walking tour in return for our performance at Chalmers-Wesley Church, which formed part of their lunchtime concert series. The concerts were all extremely rewarding, especially a concert we did for the patients in the Montreal geriatric hospital. In this concert we also performed with the New Horizons Band, which allows adult beginners improve their playing and to learn how to perform together. In addition to this collaboration, while in Ottawa we were able to share a concert with the Ottawa Wind Ensemble, which is made up of professional and semi-professional players. We both performed individual sets, and then the concert ended with both orchestras joining together for an open rehearsal and joint performance. It was fantastic to hear a semi-professional wind ensemble perform, and to receive feedback from their conductor and the individual players while performing together.

For the majority of our stay we were based in Montreal, and were lucky enough to be there while the International Jazz Festival was taking place- the largest jazz festival in the world with hundreds of free concerts. This meant we were able to go out several times to experience music from a wide variety of different artists. The music performed also encompasses a wide range of related genres, including reggae, blues and soul. One of the highlights of the trip was the concert we went to on the last night of the festival, which had an incredible atmosphere and allowed us to engage with the locals and other visitors.

To conclude our tour we spent one day in New York City, where we attempted to see as much of the city as we could in the short time we had. My personal highlights included seeing the Statue of Liberty from the Stratton Island ferry, and cycling around Central Park.

This tour was a fantastic opportunity to develop teamwork skills, not only while playing together as a group, but also when we were all helping to set up for rehearsals and concerts and when loading the instruments into the van. The intensive rehearsal and concert schedule meant that I was able to improve my individual level on the French horn, while developing as a member of an ensemble. I also hope that we were able to expand the reputation of the University Musical Society abroad!

I would like to thank Pembroke for their contribution which has allowed me to have this wonderful opportunity, via the Hansen trust fund.