

Variations Chamber Music in Ullapool

The Apprentice Sessions

What is the Apprentice Session?

The Apprentice gives you the opportunity to perform a movement from a string, wind or piano chamber work as a member of the Edinburgh Quartet in front of a small audience of Variations participants.

How did the Apprentice Sessions come about?

The Apprentice was first suggested by Tristan Gurney, Leader of the Edinburgh Quartet at the time Variations was set up. Having experienced the warmth and support from Quartet members at the time of his audition, Tristan wanted others to have the chance to enjoy playing with such an accomplished and renowned quartet.

Should I consider playing in the Apprentice?

Yes. This is a unique opportunity, and all Variations participants are encouraged to apply for a place on the Apprentice. We know of no other chamber music course which offers the chance to perform with an established professional string quartet.

How should I prepare for the Apprentice?

Chose a movement you enjoy from a work by one of the well-known chamber music composers and start practising a few months before the Variations course. The movement should be no longer than 6 to 7 minutes and you should aim to be able to play your part fluently and expressively by the time you arrive in Ullapool.

By choosing a work that that Edinburgh Quartet are already familiar with you will get the best experience so do ask the Variations Manager for suggestions if you are unsure what to play.

Ask the Variations Manager for a place on the Apprentice sessions soon after you apply for the course and let them know the composer, work and movement you've chosen when you start practising.

Who will be at the Apprentice Sessions?

The Edinburgh Quartet and other course Tutors will be at the session and if you chose a string quartet to perform then you will take the place of the Quartet member playing your part. The audience will be Variations participants including the other Apprentice players in your session.

The Apprentice was conceived as a performance rather than a rehearsal, so the audience has an important part to play. However, the atmosphere will be friendly and supportive with everyone wanting you to enjoy the occasion.

What will I get from the Apprentice?

You will find out what it feels like to perform as a member of a professional chamber group and experience a huge sense of achievement once you hear applause from the appreciative audience.

This will be an unforgettable event – in a good way! After all, ‘nothing ventured, nothing gained’.

How is the Apprentice organised?

The Apprentice is run on Monday and Thursday afternoons during the Variations chamber music week in Ullapool. Each session is an hour and a quarter with 10 ‘apprentices’ at most each afternoon.

The Variations Manager will arrange the works to create a varied and interesting programme for the audience but please say if you have a preference for which day you would like to perform.

If there are more than 20 applicants for places, then we will prefer those who have not yet experienced the Apprentice over those who have played with the Edinburgh Quartet in previous courses.

2 August 2022