

Some reminiscences from members of the Orchestra about Nikolaus and Alice Harnoncourt, who both became Honorary Members of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in 2007.

Enno Senft, Double Bass

The name “Nikolaus Harnoncourt” is synonymous for bringing music of any era to life as if it was written today, and to give it lasting relevance for all listeners. The COE’s musical belief embodies this philosophy entirely, and we worked with Nikolaus over decades to make this a reality. Uncompromising in quality,

with unrivalled energy and commitment in our live performances – we are proud to have made his musical language part of our unique style.

Marieke Blankestijn, Leader

I am very, very proud of what we did with Nikolaus over all those years, and he once wrote me a message on a bottle of local Sekt that he was happy with me too. This bottle will never be drunk and is very important to me.

Fiona Brett, Violin

He became the greatest influence on my musical life, and I can never thank him enough for the amazing new world which he opened up for me. We made many recordings with him and I cherish every one, but my favourite has to be the Dvořák Slavonic Dances when he used say: “You must dig out your Czech grandmothers.”

Will Conway, Cello

I have many inspiring memories of working with Nikolaus, but none more so than during a Smetana opera performance where I witnessed him, a man in his 80s, with both feet off the ground in a demonstration of his total commitment, transcendent in every way!

Iris Juda, Violin

He gave us the courage to express the right emotions at any moment in a composition, even if it meant not producing a “beautiful” sound. He asked us to “convey the strong statement of

each composition to its full potential”; that for him was the beauty.

Dane Roberts, Double Bass

Nikolaus Harnoncourt belonged to a category of conductors and artists who were driven by and served music. This was a mutual friendship with much respect, laughter and many gifts given in this shared 30-year musical journey. It was this human side of Nikolaus and Alice Harnoncourt that perhaps in the end connected and committed the COE the most to so many years of collaboration.

Leo Phillips, Violin

They are indelible memories: heady, intense periods of work, when even his simple “Good Morning!”, enigmatic and earnest, wide-eyed and wonderful, seemed, at the outset of each rehearsal day, to hold almost infinite promise.

Katrine Yttrehus, Violin

The quirky, but very descriptive imagery he came up with to explain a certain atmosphere or musical line will stick with me forever – I still know when the accompaniment of the second violins needs to “provide the barbecue the first violins get roasted on!”

Josine Buter, Flute

Alice was always at the rehearsals with a score, I think he couldn't have done it without her! Wonderful memories.

Geoff Prentice, Timpani

Three people taught me how to play timpani in an orchestra. Two were my timpani teachers. The third was Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

Christopher Gunia, Bassoon

I never missed a COE/Harnoncourt project, I didn't want to miss the fun! Working with Harnoncourt was always a learning experience, stimulating, inspiring and constantly challenging any sense of routine. To paraphrase his philosophy on making music: “For an artist, there is no beauty in safety.”

Jaime Martin, Flute

Playing with COE and Harnoncourt has been the musical highlight of my life.

Dorle Sommer, Viola

No one was able to escape the incredible energy and the conviction that the piece we were currently working on was the greatest thing of all. The live recordings on this CD box set bring back the most beautiful and vivid memories. Truly heartwarming!

Tomas Djupsjöbacka, Cello

As a musician, I am challenged and often required to think about my opinions – “why do I play the way I do” or “why should this phrase be played this way...” This is the key to learning, and after a project with Maestro Harnoncourt, I always felt I had learnt something

new about music. That is one of the biggest gifts a musician can receive.

Howard Penny, Cello

Putting a work in its context, recognising the limitations and idiosyncrasies of notation and always questioning received “traditions”, are things I've learnt from his groundbreaking work with us: a flame I hope to keep burning as long as I am making music.

Jonathan Williams, Horn

Always a practical musician, the basses and horns were placed together to better achieve his aim of producing the fundamental swing he believed was common to all music, and the orchestra was liberated by this freedom.

Clara Andrada de la Calle, Flute

I wish every musician could have had the chance to work with him. I am convinced there was a “before and after Nikolaus Harnoncourt” effect for every musician who ever worked with him.