

Pamela Spofforth (1924-2008)

Pamela Spofforth was an extraordinary and inspiring teacher of the violin and, with the cellist, Elizabeth Hewlins, brought about no less than a transformation of the playing of chamber music in this country. Pro Corda (the National School for Young Chamber Music Players), which they founded in 1969 and which continues to flourish, has inspired generations of young musicians with the joys and challenges of playing string quartets and Pamela gave unselfishly of her time, energy and money to that end throughout her working life.

Brought up in Surrey, she studied the violin with Eda Kersey and Sascha Lasserson and played chamber music at home with her cellist sister, Anita, and her mother who played the piano.

As violin teacher at Woking County Grammar School for Girls her frustration with the low standards of string playing and lack of support for talented students led to the formation of Pro Corda and the first course of approximately 25 students took place at the Yehudi Menuhin School in the summer of 1969. The number of pupils grew steadily and in 1977 the Trustees managed to raise sufficient funds to purchase Leiston Abbey House in Suffolk.

Pamela taught privately and from 1986-92 travelled to London to teach at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music. In 1996 she received an MBE for services to music. She continued to oversee the growth of Pro Corda after the death of Betty Hewlins in 1991 but a debilitating stroke brought a close to her working life.

She was a formidable lady whose forthright opinions, such as her strong belief in the superiority of chamber music over orchestral playing in the training of young musicians, were trenchantly held. She had a passion for excellence, a complete dedication to music and a deep affection for her students, an affection which was strongly reciprocated. The astounding number of former Pro Corda students who are active in the profession today as well as an equally large number who, though not active professionally, have been inspired with a lifelong passion for music is her marvellous and enduring legacy.

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