

## **Rio International Cello Encounter 2018 European Tour comes to East Yorkshire**

The Violinist David Johnson and Cellist David Chew will be returning to their East Riding roots this year to perform a series of chamber concerts. Rio Cello's European tour includes concerts in London, Paris, Cologne, Naples and whilst in the UK, Hull, Cottingham, Beverley and Scarborough. As David Chew rightly says, "bringing a ray of tropical and Latin American sunshine and music to Yorkshire" They will be bringing with them professional musicians from various countries who all met in Rio de Janeiro at the Rio International Cello Encounter.

The two Davids first met in Beverley where they were both members of the East Riding County Youth Orchestra. David Johnson became leader of the orchestra, and David Chew, leader of the cello section.

They both recognise how fortunate they were to receive free musical education both at school and in the community and to receive grant aid at University. The support and encouragement of their marvellous teachers inspired them to achieve their dreams of becoming professional musicians in a highly competitive world.

David Chew comes from a family whose involvement in music goes back several generations. He was educated at Beverley Grammar School, first studying the cello with Elizabeth Curtis, Miss Slater and Wendy Goodman, names well known to many an aspiring young musician in Hull! He was a member of the Junior Philharmonic Orchestra, East Riding County Youth Orchestra and at 15 became the youngest member of the Hull Philharmonic Orchestra. He studied in London at the Guildhall school of music with William and Tony Pleeth and after graduation achieved a post graduate degree at Hull University, specializing in Brazilian music. He was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain for 3 years, working under some distinguished conductors such as Pierre Boulez.

He and his Brazilian wife arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1981 where he was principal cello with the Orquestra Sinfonica Brasileira. He has been one of the most active cellists in the country, teaching and performing in Brazil and on the International scene. He has been a jury member for prestigious International Cello Competitions, and won many International awards for his interpretation of Brazilian music.

Inspired by the Bosnian cellist Vedram Smilovic who defied the Serbian onslaught by playing in the streets of Sarajevo and by the plight of the street children in Rio, David founded Rio International Cello Encounter in 1994, an annual music festival offering free admission to all. Music to create peace and harmony. Over the years many notable artists from all over the world have performed without a fee at the festival. As David says, "Language is never a problem as music is spoken with many dialects, everyone is richer for the patois that results" One of the perennial challenges of the festival has been to find funding for the enterprise, airfares, meals, transportation, accommodation, hall hire etc, but so often money has miraculously arrived from unexpected sources, from institutions and from generous private donors plus of course the application for every grant that might apply!

David and Rio Cello regularly go into the Rio favelas bringing music to the destitute and deprived, teaching many children to play instruments. One of David's best pupils came from a favela. He had a natural talent and eventually graduated in three subjects, returning to his favela to help other underprivileged children, keeping them away from drug lords and corruption. The greatest reward to all the musicians and artists is to see these very poor children smiling and playing music together as music has healing powers and also breaks down social barriers. David's two daughters have now incorporated Cello Dance and Cello Tinta (paint) into the Festival, involving children with visual arts projects. David would like to see Brazil implementing a national music programme for social change, such as is happening in Venezuela and Colombia.

David Chew and David Johnson have maintained a strong friendship throughout the years despite their lives as professional musicians separating them by continents and oceans, David Johnson, in Cologne, Germany and David Chew, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Whilst touring South America with the Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne in 1999 the two Davids met up and David Johnson was invited to play at the Rio International Cello Encounter where in 2003 he performed the Beethoven Triple Concerto. David has continued to be actively involved with this prestigious International festival.

Both Davids have a wealth of memories, experiences and stories to relate of their experiences of the many thousands who gathered for their free public concerts in Rio. David Johnson remembers playing the final piece in a concert where the audience were so moved and captivated by the rhythm of the music, a Scottish dance, that they spontaneously stood up and started singing a Brazilian song, a stunning experience he says, as if the audience themselves closed the festival. David Chew remembers receiving fish and fruit for his teaching services and scary moments such as playing in a violent favela when a gun battle broke out around them.

David Chew was awarded an OBE by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 2010 for services to music in Brazil. He received an Honorary doctorate in Music by the University of Hull and was given the keys of the City of Rio de Janeiro for his work with social music projects.

It is therefore very apt that, by chance, these concerts coincide with the Freedom Festival weekend in Hull.

David Johnson was born in Hull, and grew up in Hessle in the East Riding. He started playing the violin at the age of 8. He attended Hessle High School and had lessons with Fred Applewhite who inspired many people to become professional musicians. David says "I worked with Fred in various chamber music ensembles, playing in musical festivals, concerts and schools in the area. It was during our mid teens that he encouraged David Chew and myself to perform the musically and technically demanding Shostakovich 8th String Quartet which left a lasting impression on us both "

David went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and afterwards won a scholarship to study with Tibor Varga and Lukas David in Detmold, Germany. In 1980 he won a position in the Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne, also known as the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra, one of Germany's leading orchestras and with one of the oldest histories.

He has performed and recorded regularly with the orchestra both in Germany and on worldwide tours and is also actively involved in solo and Chamber concerts. He recently performed the York Holler Streichquartet no 2 in the Cologne Philharmonie.

David has always been supportive of new young professional players. In 2017 he played duo concerts in Hull and Scarborough with local born cellist Tom Bertolotti, who has recently won a place with La Scala Milan. He has always encouraged amateur players to explore their love of music and performs with amateur groups and orchestras both here and in Cologne. He has helped find concert venues in the Cologne area for many groups coming from England including the City of Hull Youth Symphony Orchestra and the East Riding Senior Wind Orchestra. In the UK he has performed both the Bruch and Tchaikovsky Violin Concertos and with The City of Hull Youth Symphony Orchestra, in Hull City Hall, the Prokofiev 2nd Violin Concerto. In 2019 he hopes to return here to play the Brahms Violin Concerto.

The international musicians coming to Hull with the two Davids are,

Elizabeth Mucha, pianist, of Scottish-Polish descent who has broadcast in Britain, Canada, Philippines and Brazil.

Haroutune Bedelian, violinist, who when aged 20 won 1st prize in the BBC Violin Competition was born in Cyprus. He has performed to acclaim in North and South America, UK, Europe and the Middle East.

Lorna Griffitt DM., American pianist, who enjoys an active career as a soloist and chamber musician in the US, South America, Europe and the Middle East

Tania Lisboa, Brazilian cellist with concert engagements encompassing Europe, Asia, North and South America.

Blas Rivera, Argentinian Pianist, saxophonist, composer and arranger.

Otto Henriot, Brazilian bandoneon player and composer.

Blas and Otto, together with the two Davids form the Blas Rivera Quartet fusing Argentinian and Brazilian tango with elements of jazz.

The musicians will be giving their time and talents to support The Moghissi Laser Trust at their Cottingham Charity concert. The Trust finances the Yorkshire Laser Centre who are pioneers in Research, Clinical trials, Detection and treatment of cancer.

David Chew and David Johnson are particularly grateful for all that their local music education has given them here in Hull and the East Riding and want to give something back to the community that nurtured their musical talent. Their hope is that these chamber concerts will become an annual event where international musicians come to the City of Hull not only to give concerts but to also to involve young folk who are learning instruments, supporting equality and diversity, offering free lessons, masterclasses and involvement in the concerts.