

Tafelmusik

AN INTERVIEW WITH MONICA ARMOUR



MONICA ARMOUR has been a subscriber since Tafelmusik's early years. Her generous and musically-inspired donation has made it possible for Eric Hoepfich to reunite with Tafelmusik as guest soloist for these concerts.

Tell us about your connection to Tafelmusik. How far back does it go?

I think it would have been in the mid-1980s, around 1986 or 1987. I was living on Major Street at the time, just around the corner from Trinity-St Paul's Church, and I noticed that Tafelmusik was playing there. I've always liked baroque music so I went to a concert and I got hooked immediately. I've been a subscriber ever since.

What drew you to Tafelmusik?

The musicianship, the music they play, and the way they play it. And it was certainly very easy to get there – I could leave my house at ten minutes to eight for a concert!

How did you meet Eric Hoepfich?

There was a notice in one of the Tafelmusik programmes asking for people to billet guest artists in their homes. I lived so close to the church and I had a large room on the third floor of my house which was not occupied, and I thought, "Well, why not?" So I called up the office and Eric was one of several artists they sent to stay with me.

You obviously enjoyed hosting musicians in your home!

I've hosted a few musicians from abroad – the German horn player Ab Koster, the pianist Geoffrey Lancaster from Australia, Johannes Leertouwer, the violinist from Amsterdam ... I loved having them! I loved hearing them practise – it was a pleasure.

Do you remember the first time you heard Eric play?

That was in 1991 when he played the Mozart Clarinet concerto with Tafelmusik on an instrument Eric made himself. In addition to being a superb performing artist, he makes instruments replicating on earlier clarinets, basset horns and chalumeaux. I still have a visceral memory of the thrill of hearing him play that concerto!

Can you describe what you enjoy about Eric's playing?

First of all, he is a superb artist, but at the same time he's extremely modest and understated. There's an

artistry in his playing that's just exquisite. And his intelligence comes through as well – he's a real scholar. He has written the definitive book on the clarinet, published by Yale University, and it's a masterpiece of scholarship. There's an intelligence as well as an exquisitely sensitive and emotional quality to his playing that always draws me in and often moves me profoundly.

What inspired you to make such a unique donation to Tafelmusik?

I had a landmark birthday in July and earlier in the year I wondered, what am I going to do to mark this milestone? I wasn't interested in a party and didn't want gifts. I thought the best way to celebrate this milestone would be to find a way to support some of my favourite musicians and ensembles during this year. Eric and Tafelmusik are among those at the top of my list, so I decided to try and find a way to help these two reunite.

It gives me a lot of pleasure and satisfaction to contribute in this way and I'm very appreciative of the fact that I am able to do it. Both Eric and Tafelmusik are treasures, so I wanted to bring them together again!

How do you view your role in the arts community?

It's a relational thing. These are world-class musicians and I know they can always use support in one way or another – whether it's through volunteering, serving on their boards, or making a modest financial contribution to their work. If I can help them further their careers and make it possible for more people to hear them, that's something that gives me great pleasure.