

Conservatorium of Music – Dean’s Concert and Gala Dinner

Your Excellency Professor Marie Bashir and Sir Nicholas Shehadie
 Dean Professor Kim Walker
 Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gavin Brown and Diane
 Honoured guests,
 And may I welcome particularly the Provost of Rochester University, Professor Phelps

I specially mention Ken Tribe, a founding father of Musica Viva, now 92 and here in full vigor, along with the son of Musica Viva, Tony Berg

I have been given a series of quotations from Albert Einstein. These illustrate what I describe as the extraordinary second talent. For if Einstein is thought of as a Physicist, his aphorisms show him as a deep observer of humankind with a capacity to observe the world at an oblique – or relative - angle.

I recently spoke to Kim Walker about her extraordinary combination of talents, likening this to Borodin the 19th century Russian composer. You will remember that Borodin was a Professor of Chemistry with a weakness for cats of which he had many who lived in a confusion of milk-pails, discarded scores and Bunsen burners. Tchaikovsky was a talented water-colourist though we remember him rather for the blazing romanticism of his music. Professor Gavin Brown, apart from a weakness for Fourier analysis is as likely to quote William Yeats as write a quirky *obiter dicta*. For us lawyers *obiter dicta* means something not necessary to decide; a sort of cadenza or extra flourish, like the extra leg on a centipede. But I cannot forbear from mentioning the polymathic talents of Professor Phelps from Rochester. Somehow he has managed to combine being a Professor of Community and Preventative Medicine on the one hand and a Professor of Political Science and of Economics on the other, both positions he has held at Rochester. While the economics of health care no doubt represents an intersection between these two intellectual strands we really do welcome him to this gathering as a person of unusual intellectual breadth.

But to return to Einstein. Being something of a contrarian myself, I shall ignore all the quotations I have been asked to use as my *point de départ*. Instead, I shall talk of Einstein just for a moment as a musician and violinist. Google is a wonderful search engine. From it I found a fascinating radio interview¹, in German, made a year ago on Einstein and music. As one of the speakers said, it was the joy of the music-making that moved Einstein, not any urge towards perfection.

Einstein tended to play most of his music by heart, especially Mozart and Bach using his unannotated scores with the odd brown thumb-print to jog his memory. From Einstein himself in that interview, here is my favourite quotation:²

“I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in musical concepts ... I know that life’s greatest pleasure comes, for me, from the violin.”

¹ Thanks to my tipstaff/researcher Jeremy Southwood for finding this and translating it.

² *“Ich denke oft in Musik, Ich lebe meine Tagträume in Musik. Ich sehe mein Leben in musikalischen Begriffen ... Ich weiß, daß mir die meiste Lebensfreude aus der Geige kommt.”*

We know that Albert Einstein's domestic behaviour, and not only his propensity to shut out the world, was not altogether easy for his longsuffering wife. So I should conclude with a final quotation which so well epitomises his capacity to seek refuge in thought. Think of the late Beethoven quartets, composed by a man almost entirely deaf, hearing them entirely in his head, as I leave you Einstein's *Weltanschauung*:

"I simply cannot think of my own life without music-making and I have been able to come so well to terms with myself and the world, in both difficult and happy times, because I have always had this refuge, which makes one free and self-sufficient."

This Conservatorium is not yet self-sufficient and can never be, even under Kim Walker's inspirational leadership, backed by our University. But the Con is doing an enormous amount with its limited resources and with what so many of you have given. We thank you, our benefactors, many here tonight, for your generosity, and hope you will continue to support us.

G F K Santow
Chancellor
27 February 2007