

## SUNDAY 16th The Violarama 2014

Held at Cardiff University School of Music with the Absolute Zero Viola Quartet, BVS member Michael St John writes about the music enjoyed during the day:

*On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November some 40 viola players aged from 8 to 80 gathered in Cardiff University's School of Music for a day of viola playing. Philip Heyman and Ross Cohen, aided by numerous other members of the Absolute Zero Viola Quartet, planned and ran the event with great skill and enthusiasm.*

*It began with a series of master classes in which players of varying abilities subjected themselves to the ordeal of first performing and then being gently coaxed by Philip into trying different approaches to their music.*

*As ever, several of the players had to be nagged (like me a few years ago) to play nearer the bridge in order to improve their tone and audibility. Philip emphasised the need to think about the line and direction of the music and the variety of performances which included music by Walton, Hoffmeister, Bach and Rebecca Clarke gave the audience plenty to think about before they too gathered on the stage in the main hall for massed viola quartet music of Bach and Corelli, skilfully arranged as ever by Ross Cohen.*



*Later sessions included improvisations in pairs, viola quartets scattered across various rooms throughout the Music Faculty, randomly organised quartets "composing" music to represent different animals (some of these inventions were incredible and worthy of capturing on CD) and at the end of the day, performances by several viola quartets in the main hall. The Absolute Zero quartet took this opportunity to show off their considerable talent while others simply froze with fright at having to perform in public – all the more reason to make sure the occasion becomes an annual event. An unexpected contribution came from a Cardiff viola player who, in the hope of encouraging any down-trodden violists present, sang his own lyrics to Bernstein's 'Maria'.*

*The violin maker, David Millward brought two of his own lovely instruments for anyone to play and admire.*

*It was a memorable day. The mixture of viola teachers, patient viola professionals, outstanding music students, talented young children and enthusiastic amateurs all blended well together and showed how uplifting a band of violas can be.*

**An important date for your diaries: Violarama 2015** will be on Sunday, 22 November 2015

