

Making a life in music is never easy, but it's that bit more difficult if you are penniless.

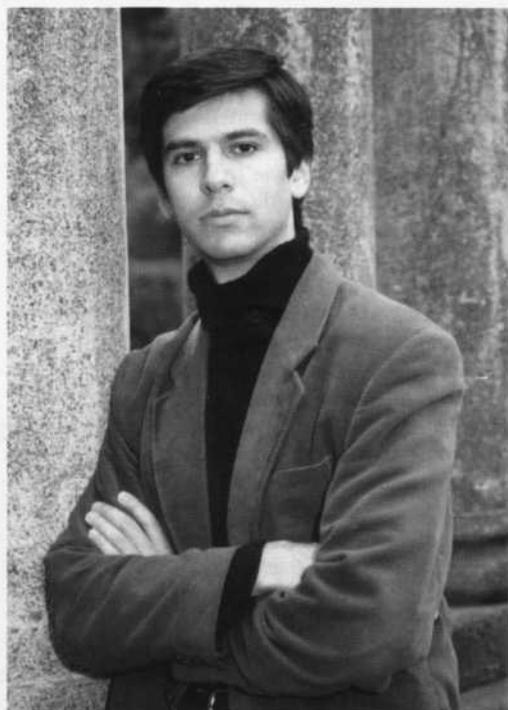
Jessica Duchen meets three musicians who didn't let lack of cash stand in their way

Going for broke

What do you call a musician without a girlfriend? Homeless. That joke (from the BBC drama series *Between the Sheets*) is a bit close to the bone for innumerable musicians. A career in music takes investment; you have to pay for lessons, buy or rent an instrument and keep a roof over your head while you are becoming established. So how do you do it if you're broke? There are different problems, with different solutions, in different countries; but the good news is that if you have enough talent, work hard, show initiative and, crucially, have a little luck, dreams can still come true, as I discovered from three musicians of diverse backgrounds: Bryan Wallick from Hamilton, Ohio; Andrew Barclay from Bromley, Kent; and Rustem Hayroudinoff from Kazan, Russia.

Patronage may not be a word much associated with 21st-century music students, but American pianist Bryan Wallick, who made his Wigmore Hall debut in September, does not doubt that he would not be where he is now without the support of a committee of New York patrons. 'It all started when I got into Juilliard but didn't have the money to go there,' he explains. A local businessman and keen amateur pianist organised a private concert for him in Hamilton, the proceeds of which paid for his first year of tuition. 'Each year afterwards, we had another concert and eventually raised \$80,000 [£45,295] over five years, which paid my tuition for my Bachelor's and Master's degrees.'

In June 1999, Wallick was heading for Pianofest in East Hampton and missed the bus. 'I had to wait



Marat Keltner

Rustem Hayroudinoff: Wandered round Soho turning caviar into cash

a couple of hours, very pissed off, for the next one. As I was waiting, I struck up a conversation with a guy called Remar. I mentioned that I was a pianist. He asked bluntly, 'Are you any good?' and I told him that I had recently won the Horowitz International Competition in Kiev.' Remar Sutton turned out to be a writer for the *Washington Post* and a board member for the New York Philomusica. He promptly called the organisation's artistic director and asked him to listen to Wallick, 'to verify whether I was just talk or could actually play'.

The resulting audition led to more valuable connections. Eventually Sutton put together a patrons' committee to help Wallick financially and socially, some giving money, others helping to open doors. 'I had my tuition at Juilliard paid by the other group of patrons, but I was still working to support myself - life in New York is expensive! I worked at the gym, in the library, in the prop shop, for the piano tuner, and walked a dog.' All this had been chipping away at his time for practising. 'The people on the committee believed that I could make a career, and didn't want to see it stifled by other jobs or lack of connections and opportunities. Thanks to them, I've had time to prepare for what I hope might become an international career.'

This, story could perhaps only have come from America, where donating private money to the arts is a relatively well-established social tradition. Andrew Barclay, percussionist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 1995, had to find help to get started, but it came primarily from a very different source: his local authority. 'If I hadn't been born in Bromley, it might never have happened,' he declares.

Barclay's father died when Andy was eight and he and his mother and siblings lived in a council house: 'We weren't destitute, but there weren't many people in that environment who were destined for a career in classical music' He was self-taught at first and says he got into his local youth orchestra through sheer good luck. 'I started out with a pair of sticks and a telephone directory - I didn't have access to any instruments. When I was at primary school in the 1970s and asked if I could learn per-

Bryan Wallick:
A chance meeting at a bus stop led to valuable connections



cussion, I was told, "You don't *learn* percussion!" At secondary school, he asked again and was sent to the saxophone teacher, who did a bit of drumming in his spare time and advised Barclay to practise on a jam jar. Then a supportive music teacher at the school brought in a local peripatetic percussion teacher, Peter Crippes, who was a member of the London Philharmonic. 'He listened to me and thought I had potential; that was how I got into the Bromley youth music system.

'I learned on the job - I didn't read music very well, but I played in the concert band on Saturday mornings and picked it up as I went along. After Peter Crippes stopped teaching there, I didn't have lessons for a while. I was very lucky that I was able to get bursaries from the borough, which enabled me to go to Canford Summer School - something I could never have afforded - for a percussion course run by Jimmy Blades and Michael Skinner, who was a percussionist at the Royal Opera House.'

Soon Barclay found that he was having lessons with top London players, being helped out financially by the borough and 'having a wonderful time' in the Bromley bands and, later, the Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra, where one of the directors 'encouraged me a lot and gave me some money on my birthday to buy a snare drum'. When Barclay got into the Royal College of Music, he received a full maintenance grant from the borough as well as the mandatory student grant. He was fortunate, too, that he didn't have to buy an expensive instrument: 'All the equipment I needed was at college. It was only after I left and did a show for a month that I earned enough money to buy a xylophone.'

Barclay went on to freelance in various orchestras, served as a dep in shows and did some teaching. 'I lived in a flat that cost £30 a month and I bought a battered old van for £400. I just sort of survived - I don't know how.' Eventually he joined the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and subsequently the LPO. 'I've been so lucky. Sometimes someone "above" seemed to have smiled on me and there have been people there to help. But I don't think it would have been the same today, and I don't know if I would have made it on a different instrument.'

Times have changed and it's distressing to realise that most of the state help Barclay received no longer exists for the next generation. 'I think that if you have the burning desire to do something, you'll find a way,' he says. 'But people have to sow the seeds and nurture talent - and it seems that sometimes today the seeds don't even get sown. You wonder how many people sitting in desk jobs could have become the next Heifetz.'

Or the next Horowitz. Russian pianist Rustem Hayroudinoff has been receiving rave reviews of his latest CD for Chandos, the complete Rachmaninov preludes, but it's barely ten years since he arrived in London fresh from the Moscow Conservatoire with nothing but /60 and ten jars of quality caviar that he'd sneaked out of Russia. 'I remember wandering around Soho trying to turn them into money,' he says. 'I got £25 a tin and that's how I was able to rent a room.'

Being broke was nothing new to Hayroudinoff, who had been finding ways to eke out a living as a Moscow student, 'in the harsh uncertainty of Perestroika. Once a band in a central Moscow restaurant agreed to take me on. But then they filled me in on what the job involved. Apparently, the best day was Friday because that was when prisoners were let out. Their criminal activities were focused outside the prison, so they had money to burn, but if

they asked you to play their favourite song, you had to play it because if you couldn't satisfy them, you were really in trouble! Then the musicians said, "If people start to shoot or stab each other, run out through the kitchen, but remember to take the synthesiser with you!"

Instead, Hayroudinoff found work as a night guard in an office building that had been a Polish cathedral in pre-USSR days. 'There was a piano on the top floor, so I was able to practise all night as well as earning some money. But once I nearly got arrested because an alarm went off and when the police banged on the door, I wasn't there to open it.'

He came to Britain to study at the Royal Academy of Music on a scholarship of £3000 a year. 'In Russia, there was no market economy, so I didn't understand how this country worked and I found people kept taking advantage of me. A lot of people seem to think that musicians are "holy fools" who don't need to eat. Beware of people saying, "We can't pay you, but it's a nice experience". Would you say that to your plumber?'

When he had finished his studies, the Home Office told him he had to leave the country. 'I decided to appeal to stay. While I was appealing, I could live here - but I wasn't allowed to work and I couldn't go abroad to work because the doors would have closed behind me. So I had no way of earning money. The Hattori Foundation saved me - I twice won a prize of £6,000 from it.'

Lazar Berman was impressed when he heard Hayroudinoff play in a competition and gave him some advice, which included finding a 'bird-feeder'. Teaching is one standard bird-feeder, but Hayroudinoff found another too: playing on cruise liners. 'They're fantastic. You live like a millionaire on the boat and get paid good fees; you usually give two 40-minute recitals in a week and there's time to practise; you see the world and you meet some fantastically interesting people. I played on the QEII and met all those rock-and-rollers from the 1960s - I found myself having drinks with Gerry and the Pacemakers!

'Still, a few years ago, my career came to a point that was like torture: you know you have something special to say, yet nothing was happening. When the opportunities aren't there, you have to be entrepreneurial and create them. I sat down with paper and pen and started generating ideas - and I remembered that I had a book of theatre music for piano by Shostakovich that had never been recorded and hardly ever performed.'

He began to phone up record companies on spec: 'Some were very snooty, others were more receptive, and when I phoned Chandos and asked to speak to the managing director, they put me straight through to Brian Couzens.' Couzens asked him to send a sample recording and the upshot was a green light. The Shostakovich CD did so well that Chandos agreed to record his Rachmaninov preludes; now it looks as if there will be more.

'So,' says Hayroudinoff, 'don't sit and be miserable, even in the worst of times. Think what you can offer the market that's not there yet. For me, the starting point was to find the niche that was not yet filled.'

It seems that there's nothing more important than encountering people who are willing to be encouraging and supportive, whether financially or morally. Add luck to the right mixture of initiative, talent and hard slog and there's a good chance that you will succeed. As for Hayroudinoff, if all else were to fail, he could make a fortune by writing his memoirs.

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