



National Youth Strings Academy

Director: Viviane Ronchetti

**NEWSLETTER
2006**



NYSA rehearses Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto with Suzanne Thorn, conducted by Sir Neville Marriner, St John's, Smith Square, 30th October, 2005.

What they said about NYSA in 2005:

"...the last great step from gifted youth to professional commitment is nursed and encouraged by a devoted teaching faculty with high standards of technical and musical gifts of their own." **Sir Neville Marriner, October 2005**

"It's not hard to see what impresses audiences and fellow musicians alike about this focused ensemble."
The Strad, October 2005

"I'm listening to one of the most perfect renderings I've ever heard of an oft-played suite by Gustav Holst.....Sir Neville Marriner continues to draw astonishing sounds out of NYSA's young string-players."
Daily Mail, 22 November 2005

"It's really training in a currency of thinking. There's lots to learn and I still find myself applying what I learnt on my first course here." **James Downs, NYSA member, 2003 -**

NYSA had a wonderful 10th Anniversary year. Out of the four concerts at Finchley, Fishguard, Aberystwyth and St John's, Smith Square, memorable moments abound. It was an enormous pleasure to welcome back as soloists ex-members **Catrin Morgan** and **Hannah Dawson**. Their spirited and committed interpretation of Sir Malcolm Arnold's Double Violin Concerto enchanted all who heard it. **Clare Jones** gave delightful performances of Debussy's 'Dances Sacres et Profanes' and NYSA was very pleased to welcome **Suzanne Thorn** from the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain as an outstanding young soloist in Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto.

CDs of 10th Anniversary Concert and Finchley Summer Concert are available now, £5 each.

A Trustee's Tale

For this trustee, the story of what is now the National Youth Strings Academy began with a telephone call from Audrey Butler, then headmistress of Queenswood, in May 1995.

'My Head of Strings, Viviane Ronchetti' she said, ' would like to launch a chamber orchestra for talented string-players from independent schools offering them the chance to work together on the string orchestra repertoire with regular opportunities to perform in public.'

This was interesting, I thought. But why was Audrey telling me this? I was not a concert promoter (though the idea had a certain appeal). I was not a wealthy orchestral benefactor (though that was an even more attractive idea). No, I was national director of something called the Independent Schools Information Service, whose acronym was ISIS.

'Viviane,' Audrey continued, 'would like to incorporate ISIS into the name of this orchestra. She wants to call it NISA – the National Isis Strings Academy. Can you help?'

That led to lunch with Audrey and Viviane to discuss how the orchestra would be organised and funded, how it would recruit its members, and then steering through the inevitable committees the proposal that ISIS should give its name and much practical help to a potentially exciting musical venture.

NISA was up and running by October, 1995. Charitable status was secured in 1996.



One of its first public performances took place in the acoustically improbable surroundings of Olympia during an ISIS-organised independent schools exhibition. Exhibitors and visitors alike listened raptly and with some surprise to the quality of playing coaxed from young musicians who had spent remarkably little time performing together until that moment. From that point, those of us who were founder-trustees were sure that this was a more than worthy enterprise.

Since that Olympia debut the orchestra has not only played its way through the saints in London – St John's Smith Square, St Peter's Eaton Square and St James's Piccadilly – and more usual concert venues such as the Adrian Boulton Hall in Birmingham and the Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh Suffolk, but also given enthusiastically-received performances on two visits to Washington DC.

It would be good to be able to say that the trustees – usually six or seven of us, meeting about four times a year – focus single-mindedly on the music. But it wouldn't be true. That other 'm' (money) is always on our agenda – and usually at the top, in the middle and at the end.

Of course, the core of our meetings is Viviane's report as director. In that context we discuss recruitment of players and auditions. In recent years that has meant recruitment from maintained as well as independent schools and other ways of involving the state education sector. The trustees are enthusiastic about that extension of the orchestra's activities, which is the most important development since its foundation: hence the transition in 2005 from NISA to NYSA – the National Youth Strings Academy.

We discuss the residential courses, which provide the all-important first-class tuition by top quality chamber musicians: it is, after all, the only youth music organisation devoted exclusively to string chamber orchestra training. We discuss the concerts for which the courses prepare the players. We discuss bursarial help, since we do not wish any young talents to be prevented by financial reasons from attending courses and developing their skills.

And so sooner or later (usually sooner) we find ourselves talking about money. NYSA has a hand-to-mouth existence. It has had – and still has – much valued support from a small number of charitable trusts and companies. But, while the musicianship is superb, it needs a secure financial foundation. The trustees have been almost entirely responsible for fund-raising, but none is a professional fundraiser.

So this trustee's tale must end with a plea to anyone who reads this who is able to help financially or knows anyone who can: please come to the aid of NYSA so that even more talented young musicians, from all backgrounds, can benefit from the NYSA experience.

David Woodhead.

Geoffrey Parker OBE, Chairman of the NYSA Trustees since 1996, retired from the Board of Trustees of NYSA during 2005. Geoffrey brought all his experience of many years to NYSA and steered the organisation through many peaks and troughs with good humour, kindness and supreme understanding of what was at stake. We are so grateful to him for all his input over ten years and wish him every best wish for the future. He continues his support as a Friend of NYSA.

Thank you, Geoffrey!

NYSA's new Chairman is Charles Clark who, in addition to all his other talents, is a keen amateur violinist. Another selfless champion of NYSA, Charles has worked tirelessly in the past few months re-structuring NYSA as a company limited by guarantee as well as playing in the Tippett Concerto for Double String Orchestra at the 10th Anniversary concert in October!

NYSA welcomes Moira Smith and Richard Davison on to the Board of Trustees this year. Another new face at NYSA is Jane MacArthur, NYSA's new accountant. NYSA's long association with ISC (formerly National ISIS– see David's article above) ended in 2005. Two of the many services ISC offered NYSA were administration support and accounting expertise. Our thanks must go to Deborah French, ISC Administrator, who, amongst other things, kept the NYSA finances in order over a three-year period. Jane MacArthur has now taken over the administration of NYSA's financial concerns. Jane has a special interest in NYSA, being a violinist herself.



2006 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Easter Course 3-9 April, Woodbridge School, Suffolk. Open Afternoon-Sunday 9th April, 2-4pm – all Friends welcome.
Summer Course 22-29 July, Queenswood School, Hatfield, herts.

***Summer Concert at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London on Saturday 29th July at 7.30 pm**

Sam Parker (leader) Raphael Hurwitz (viola) and Cecily Smith (cello) all received a special mention for their contribution to the concert at St John's Smith Square in Susan Elkin's article in the Daily Mail on 22nd November, 2005. Cecily Smith is further to be congratulated on winning a place and an Award to study at the Royal Northern College of Music, from September, 2006. **Well done, Cecily !**



From the Director:

The orchestra had an amazing weekend preparing the 10th Anniversary concert with Sir Neville Marriner who rehearsed with tremendous energy and verve. This was an experience no NYSA member present will ever forget and we are eternally grateful to Sir Neville for his time and his huge enthusiasm and support for NYSA. The first rehearsal of the Tippett with both orchestras was an emotional experience for me, representing as it did the coming together of so many strands of endeavour over ten years. It was a rare



moment, on a par with standing on the steps of the Capitol building in Washington, one balmy July evening in 1999, conducting NYSA on its first tour to USA. The following ex-members of NYSA formed the second orchestra in Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra. It was a delight to see them all again and to catch up with their news. They are a great advertisement for NYSA:

Oliver Benson, GSMD;

Sam Brewster, Selwyn College, Cambridge;

Dan Bull, RNCM;

Celia Cobb, player, teacher and mother of three;

Louise Gronberg, freelancing with the

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra;

Martin Lissola, GSMD;

Gwen Martin, Worcester College, Oxford;

Angharad Morgan,

professional player and teacher;

Catrin Morgan, RAM;

Catriona Parker, RAM;

Louisa Stonehill, professional player and teacher;

Anne Wakefield, music teacher;

Natasha White, Bristol University.

Sponsored by



NYSA is extremely grateful to its Sponsors for their generous assistance with the Bursary Fund, which makes it possible for young British string-players to continue to develop their musical education by attending NYSA courses. Over the last ten years, twenty-five percent of NYSA members have gone on to a career in music. In 2005/2006, our grateful thanks go to: **Angus Allnatt Charitable Foundation Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust Coutts & Co Emanuel Hurwitz Chamber Music Charitable Trust HSBC Insurance Brokers Education Division MBF Queenswood School Radcliffe Trust The Coln Trust**





Alex Augsburger, viola, from San Francisco, USA was a member of NYSA in 2005.

NYSA's big project this year is the tour to San Francisco. This visit is in the form of an educational exchange rather than a concert tour as in previous years. NYSA will be joining up with talented young American string-players from the 'British and American Chamber-Music Exchange' artistic director, Erika Miranda. The young players will work and play together, the emphasis being on sharing and exchanging ideas over respective approaches to ensemble playing. Planned performances in San Francisco include a string orchestra concert by NYSA at St Mary's Cathedral, a chamber music concert by B & A CME and two further performances consisting of combined chamber music works and combined string orchestra repertoire at Mission Dolores and Grace Cathedral. Rehearsals will take place at San Francisco State University. NYSA students will be staying on campus during their visit. It is hoped that NYSA's visit to San Francisco can be the first step towards a future International Festival of Youth String Ensembles.

Valete!

Geoffrey Parker OBE Deborah French
Georgina Dixon Jemma Hall Jenny Jacom Kate Mason Alexandra Philpotts
Christopher Rands Cecily Smith Myles Watkiss

Special thanks must go to Mrs Joanna Philpotts for generously creating opportunities for NYSA to promote its activities on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Suffolk and in the 'Strad' magazine while Alexandra was a NYSA member.

Photographs by Richard Davison.

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