



National ISCis Strings Academy
Musical Director: Viviane Ronchetti

Newsletter
January 2003

NISA NEWS from the DIRECTOR

NISA Concert Dates 2003

Thursday 17 April 2003

**Jubilee Hall,
Aldeburgh
at 5.00pm**

Saturday 26 July 2003

**Adrian Boulton Hall,
Birmingham**

**Saturday 1 November
2003**

**St Peter's Church,
Eaton Square, London**

A very happy New Year to everyone associated with NISA.

2002 was a year of change for NISA.

We have a new-look logo and a slight name change – we are now National ISCis Strings Academy but still NISA for short.

Although we were only able to run one course in 2002, it was a happy and productive one ending with a most satisfying concert conducted by Levon Parikian at St Peter's, Eaton Square, London. This newsletter includes a short piece about the concert by Councillor Anne Worsley who does a great deal to advance the cause of Music Education for the Young in Inner London.

Levon Parikian has now joined us as NISA's regular conductor. I have been conducting NISA for rather longer than I originally intended. It was always my intention to involve a professional conductor on a regular basis when the right person came along. We all feel that Levon is that person and we are delighted that he is so pleased to become part of the organisation.

Early in 2002 the very generous financial support NISA has enjoyed from Quilter & Co Ltd finally came to an end. Their sponsorship has underwritten the cost of tuition fees over three years. It also supported NISA's 5th Anniversary concert in 2000 conducted by Sir Neville Marriner. We are very grateful to Quilter & Co Ltd for their generosity and would like to say a big 'thank you' to them on behalf of everyone at NISA.

In September 2002 we said goodbye to Carolyn Parrish at ISCis. Carolyn went off to China for six months and her place was taken by Deborah French. Carolyn spent long hours taking care of the many complicated financial

aspects of NISA's existence and Deborah has now inherited this not inconsiderable work-load. Carolyn continues to contribute to NISA as a member of the board of Trustees.

In 2002 we also said goodbye to Felicity Garland as a member of the house staff team and to some of our older members – Daniel Bull ('cello), Oliver Benson (bass), Natasha White (bass), Louise Grönberg (viola) who may rejoin as a member of the house staff and Martin Lissola who has been such a good leader. We say goodbye and good luck to all of them – every member of this group has made a special contribution to NISA's success on many occasions during their time with us and this is our chance to say thank you! We are also sorry to say good bye to Christian Gregory (violin) this year.

Queenswood School will continue their valuable support of NISA although I am now no longer a member of staff there. The courses in February, July and October 2003 will take place at Queenswood while the Easter course heralds a very welcome return to Woodbridge School, Suffolk. NISA's main concert this year will be at the Adrian Boulton Hall, Birmingham in July. This is a lovely hall to play in. We hear on the grapevine that it will not be in existence for much longer so we thought it was a good idea to return there soon, as we enjoyed it so much in 2001. The April concert will be in the Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh and the October concert will be at St Peter's, Eaton Square, as usual.

NISA 2003 will be made up of a good mix of current players and new members, with Amy Wordingham taking over as leader of the orchestra. We look forward to some interesting courses and some exciting concerts.



Bethan Davies and Ellie Whittingham

Open Forum

NISA Course Dates 2003

- Saturday 15 February - Sunday 16 February
- Saturday 12 April - Thursday 17 April
- Sunday 20 July - Saturday 26 July
- Thursday 30 October - Saturday 1 November

Fees

- Membership of NISA for the year 2003 costs £850 to include full board and specialist coaching on all four courses.
- Payment in instalments by standing order can be arranged.
- NISA offers some bursary help towards fees based on talent and need. Information about bursaries can be obtained from NISA upon application. NISA also provides a list of other trusts who offer awards for music education.

Information and Audition Forms

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An **Open Forum** for present members to air their views took place on the July course at Queenswood. Students, coaching staff, house staff and Levon Parikian all attended although the floor was given over to the students themselves. They were split up into groups of five or six and set these aspects to consider:

How many courses did they want per year?

Did they wish to operate a Summer course only or two courses or the full four we had done to date?

What changes would they like to see if any?

The groups had discussions and made their decisions.

Each group then appointed a spokesperson to put forward their particular point of view.

Results and Comments:

The four-course year was upheld unanimously.

It was most gratifying to hear that NISA students supported the four-course year as it indicated that all students could see that this was the way NISA worked best.

Suggestions were made concerning distribution of music before the courses.

Distributing music by post before courses is something we did at NISA in the early years. It was discontinued because the expense of postage was not felt to be justified when students arrived at courses having either mislaid music or not prepared very much of it in time for the course. We are certainly open to persuasion on this one.

There were requests for Quartet workshops and individual masterclasses during the courses and opportunities to play solo in concerts at the courses.

NISA occupies a unique position in music education in UK in that it is the only organisation which exists solely for string chamber orchestra training. Pro Corda provides excellence in

quartet training and there are many Summer Schools which provide differing levels of opportunity for individual performance and master-class coaching. The String Chamber orchestra repertoire is a highly specialised area and the training is tiring, as you know. In free time, there are many sporting activities on offer in order to refresh you for the next onslaught. Those wishing to play quartets are most welcome to do so as a relaxation. I am not keen to make this an official activity for coaching etc. as I do not wish to muddy the waters of what NISA has been set up to provide nor do I wish to cause consternation to other organisations by overflowing into their territory.

There were requests to be taken into London to concerts on free evenings and for performances to be put on at the course by coaching staff and others.

Where finance and practicalities allow it, we will certainly be happy to arrange concert visits and concerts on the course. The reason this has not been done before is that I, personally, believe that you can have too much of a good thing but if this is what you all want, we can certainly provide it – with pleasure.

There was some dissatisfaction voiced by one group about playing similar repertoire over a period of time.

The most successful concert programmes are those which are made up of a combination of repertoire already performed in public and repertoire which is having its first outing. This is a normal procedure in professional concerts. Perusal of the repertoire that NISA has covered during the last seven years - as listed in the current brochure - will show that anyone who has been a member of NISA for more than two years will have covered in detail vast amounts of the current recognised repertoire for string orchestra. They will also have had the opportunity to work on pieces of every period of music in order to learn as much as possible about styles as well as notes.

Reviews

CD recording

A CD recording of the Birmingham Concert in the Adrian Boult Hall in July 2001 is still available. Works include *Divertimento K136* by Mozart, *Ricercare* from 'Musical Offering' by JS Bach, *Holberg Suite* by Grieg, *String Symphony No. 10 in B minor* by Mendelssohn and *Serenade for Strings Op. 48* by Tchaikovsky. Available at £5 at NISA courses and concerts, or contact Jane Brown on 01442 851396.

Friends of NISA

If you are reading this, you may well be a Friend of NISA already. If not, why not become one? For £15 a year you will receive the NISA newsletter, concert notification with booking priority, an invitation to any social events prior to concerts and an invitation to watch rehearsals in progress.

In addition there is the satisfaction of knowing you are supporting and encouraging talented string players from all over the country, helping to give them the opportunity to experience world class coaching and the thrill of performing to the highest standard. If you are interested, please contact Jane Brown on 01442 851396 or send an e-mail to jane.r.brown@lineone.net.

National ISCis Strings Academy Concert 27 July 2002

Anne V Worsley
Borough Music School

We are accustomed to stepping into a church to hear an occasional concert by professional musicians, especially in central London where so many musicians are seeking opportunities to perform. On this occasion though, St Peter's Eaton Square was filled with music made by an orchestra of young people, all of them at school, whose performance combined youthful energy and enthusiasm with a professional standard equal to the best of other concerts.

This is a tribute to the high standard of their training, directed by Viviane Ronchetti, and to the skill of the guest conductor, Levon Parikian, but most of all to the application of the young people themselves, who clearly aspire to the very highest level. In addition, the sonorous acoustic of the church set the performance off to advantage.

The Capriol Suite by Peter Warlock made a bright and vigorous introduction. This was followed by Mozart's *Serenata Notturna*, a less well known piece in which the quartet of two violins, viola and double bass showed off the soloists' skills. The *Serenade* by Dag Wirén was a return to a modern style, contrasting with Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto no 3* which followed. Lastly, Benjamin Britten's (not so) *Simple Symphony*, with its contrasting styles, formed an exciting, and impeccably played finale.

The young people who have benefited from the advanced tuition offered by NISA reach a remarkable standard of technical skill and good ensemble playing. I have occasionally been able to bring my own music pupils to these concerts and they have been awed by the standard of playing they have heard. It is an added benefit that these players can inspire pupils who hear them to greater effort and achievement.

Reflections of a double bass player

Natasha White

Playing the double bass with NISA for five years has given me a fantastic opportunity to seriously improve my playing, receive coaching from some of the most experienced and well-respected musicians in England, and to make many good friends with whom I am still in contact.

The hard work and commitment put into the courses by all involved paid off, resulting in many memorable concerts, including two exciting tours to Washington D.C., and NISA's Fifth Anniversary Concert in July 2000 at St. John's, Smith Square, London, conducted by our patron, Sir Neville Marriner.

Such intensive courses produce a strong camaraderie within the orchestra, which embraces also our long-suffering tutors, on whom we are so dependent. The environment is intense, but very friendly, and all are made welcome.

It was a privilege to play pieces such as Elgar's 'Introduction and Allegro' and Bartok's 'Divertimento' to such a high standard, and I felt extremely proud to be a member of NISA for so many years.

My own standard of double bass playing as well as my interest in the instrument itself increased enormously during my years with NISA. This can only be attributed to the quality of the coaching and the enthusiasm and professionalism of all members of the staff.



Russell Grant and Oliver Benson

Schools represented - 1995 to 2003

Abingdon School, Abingdon
Aldenham School, Elstree
Aldridge Comprehensive
Aldro School, Godalming
Arts Educational School, Tring
Ashby Ivanhoe High School, Ashby de la Zouch
Bingley Grammar School, Bingley
Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales School, Cardiff
Bishop Stopford School
Bloxham School, Banbury
Brighton and Hove High School
Chesterton Community College, Cambridge
Chetham's, Manchester
City of London School
Dame Allan's Girls School, Newcastle upon Tyne
Dauntsey's School
Eton College
European School, Culham, Oxon
Fine Arts College, London
Francis Holland School, Clarence Gate, London
Gordonstoun School
Haberdasher's Aske's School, Elstree
Haberdasher's Aske's School for Girls
Henley College, Henley-on-Thames
Highgate School
Hitchin Girls School, Herts
Hipperholme Grammar School, Halifax
Hymers College, Hull
King Edward VI Grammar, Chelmsford
King Henry VIIIth School, Coventry
Kings College, Taunton
Lady Margaret School, Parson's Green
Latymer Upper School, London
Llandovery College
Lycee Francais de Londres
Magdalen College School, Oxford
Maidstone Grammar School for Girls
Monmouth School
Musikkonservatoriet, Falun, Sweden
Nastegardzsalan, Kvaenum, Sweden
Millfield
Mill Hill
New Hall School, Chelmsford
North London Collegiate School, Edgware
Notting Hill and Ealing High School
Oundle
Purcell School, Bushey
Queenswood School, Hatfield
Repton School
Roedean, Brighton
Royal Masonic School for Girls, Rickmansworth
Rugby School
Scairsbrook Hall School, Ormskirk
Sevenoaks School, Kent
Sibford School, Banbury
St Helen's School, Northwood
St. Maur's School, Weybridge
South Hampstead School, London
Southend High School for Boys
The German School, Richmond
The King's School, Ely
The Latymer School
Trinity School, Croydon
Wells Cathedral School
Wellington College
West Kirby Grammar School
Wisbech Grammar School, Norfolk
Woodbridge School
Ysgol y Preseli School, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Conductor

Introducing Levon Parikian

Levon Parikian studied conducting with George Hurst and, at his encouragement, auditioned successfully for a position in Ilya Musin's class at the St. Petersburg conservatoire. Here he gained an insight into Musin's rigorous technique of conducting, which has influenced generations of Russian conductors.

Since his return from Russia, Levon has pursued a freelance conducting career, and is much in demand as Guest Conductor with orchestras in Britain. He currently holds Principal Conductor posts with several London-based orchestras, and is Chief Guest Conductor of the City of Oxford Orchestra. He was recently appointed Conductor of the Royal College of Music Junior Sinfonia, Visiting Guest Conductor at Royal Holloway University of London, and Artistic Director of The Rehearsal Orchestra. He has also worked with, among others, English Sinfonia, European Chamber Opera, City of Southampton Orchestra, and the Royal Orchestral Society. Levon has been Assistant Conductor on recordings with the Philharmonia and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and to Sir Simon Rattle in The Rehearsal Orchestra's weekend on Bruckner's Ninth Symphony.

He writes...

I enjoyed my week with NISA string orchestra enormously. Viviane Ronchetti and Roger Garland have engendered an atmosphere of relaxed but disciplined hard work, designed to bring the very best out of young musicians. The tutors were helpful and encouraging to the students, who responded eagerly. While the emphasis of the week was on continued improvement, and development of rehearsal skills, the final concert was an exciting culmination to the week's activities.



Levon Parikian conducts NISA July 2002