



North London Colourstrings

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome back after the break! There are lots of events this term, so please check dates and put them in your diary NOW! You can also check on the website under 'News' and 'More Dates for Your Diary'.

Concerts

We have some lovely concerts coming up this term - two Sunday **Days of Concerts** in June (see dates page) and the two more formal Saturday **Showcase Concerts** (May and July). Why not come along and have a very stimulating, enjoyable experience and relax in the interval with a soft drink or glass of wine? (The Showcase Concerts are suitable for children of 5 years+ only.) All our ensembles have a chance to play at the Showcase Concerts and we intersperse their performances with solos of all instruments. "*Fantastic!*" "*Such a high standard!*" "*The children were all really enjoying themselves!*" - these are just some of the many comments we receive about these concerts.

As ever, we only get better by constantly reviewing what we do and how we do it, so your feedback, whether positive or negative, is always welcomed.

On behalf of all our enthusiastic teachers, I wish you a very happy and productive term!

Deborah Harris

Colourstrings & Géza Szilvay

Deborah has worked closely with Dr Géza Szilvay, originator of Colourstrings, and his brother, Csaba, since 1992 when she first visited Finland to find out more about this extraordinary approach to music teaching. She was 'hooked' from the first moment. Over the years, Deborah and Géza have often worked together - on the tapes/CDs and development of the violin materials - and Deborah has accompanied Géza a number of times on orchestra tours and teacher training courses in other countries. Originally entitled *The North London Academy of Music*, The North London Colourstrings Centre first changed its name in 1996 as it established itself as a leading music school and as flagship Colourstrings school.

Over the years, the school has developed to become closer and closer to Deborah's original vision of a 6-days-a-week school providing high quality music education with a very high overall standard, comparable with the junior music colleges but more wide-ranging in its brief and intake, both in terms of age and ability and proving that everyone can be successful with music if the teaching is right.

Honorary Professor of Music

There are still lots of things left to achieve: however, one momentous step has been that Géza Szilvay has recently accepted the invitation to become Honorary Professor of Music of the school. This is a great honour for us all and marks a point of change that reflects more closely our current and future standard. We are now a school for babies, toddlers, infants, juniors, seniors and adults; we have eleven flourishing ensembles that are of a very high standard and containing many students who have been with us since the school first started. Our adult classes are also set to expand.

As we have grown, what we offer has grown to match the needs of these once small children, many of whom are now towering teenagers. The standard of teaching has risen ever higher and the playing standard is now extremely high across the board. We have never lost, and will never lose sight of the importance of nurturing and developing the children who belong to the school and assisting their families in participating as much as possible because we want our passion to become theirs and to enable fulfilment of musical dreams at every age and stage and for all abilities.

To reflect the gradual change from a junior school to an all-encompassing school - cradle to college, as it were - from September, we shall be changing our name to **The North London School of Music**. In every other respect, it will remain the same with Colourstrings/Kodály firmly at the heart of its agenda and there will be no changes in personnel or in the way things are run musically. Music Kindergarten will continue to be advertised as Colourstrings Music Kindergartens and instrumental programmes will continue to be Colourstrings.

As a team, we thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for what we do: the success of the children and the school depends on collaboration of parents, teachers and children: what better way to go forward for the next decades?

Re-enrolment

This is the term for re-enrolments! If you have any queries or concerns, please make them known early so we can deal with them in a timely way. Timetabling will only include those people who have sent back their forms on time with their payment, so please return your forms on time (or early!). It is a major task and to make it more likely that you will get your first choice, or near it, of time and day, we need your co-operation.

**Summer Course
Enrolment Forms
RETURN NOW!**

The Colourstrings Children's Summer Course 26-29 July

This will be our first Summer Course for six years and is a really exciting venture for the school. Activities on offer: Dalcroze Eurythmics, percussion groups, keyboard lab sessions, full and sectional orchestral sessions, guitar ensemble, piano masterclasses and lots more... Please send your completed application forms to the office back in good time and no later than 23/05/08. We would be grateful for more volunteer helpers, so please email Laura on laura@nlcolourstrings.co.uk if you would be interested in joining us

Showcase Concerts

So far this academic year we have had 3 Showcase Concerts and there are still two more to come! These concerts always feature a mix of wonderful solo, ensemble and orchestral performances, but

this year has taken them to a new level. December 2007 saw the introduction of a Festive Showcase

Concert, where as well as giving their own individual performances, the choir and orchestra joined forces, for the first time ever, in a Carol medley. The Toy Symphony, with teachers playing percussion, added to the festivities. We were delighted to invite Urszula Galuszka (guitar) and Michiko Negami (violin) to play in the Showcase Teachers' Corner in March - an inspiration for all of us. Come and join us on 17th May or 5th July to see why these concerts are so popular.

Frankie's piano party

On Saturday 1st March around 16 pianists from year 1 to 7 dodged the Arsenal match and performed to each other at Frankie's Piano Party. It was a fun and inspiring afternoon and great to play and listen in an informal setting. Many older pupils came as a dry run for the concert reviews. It was noticeable that those who performed at both were well in their stride by the time of the concert reviews. For the younger ones, each time they perform they seem to be so much more confident which is wonderful to see and hear!

Practice concerts

These are concerts with a difference! A cross between a concert, a rehearsal, and a masterclass, Practice concerts give performers the opportunity to try out a new piece in front of a small and friendly audience in the Village Club. The teacher in charge will give immediate feedback, and there is usually time for performers to try out one or two of the new ideas. There are two Practice concerts in the Summer Term, so put the dates in your diary.



Masterclasses - NEW

We can all learn from hearing others play and teach so we are planning to hold regular Masterclasses, starting soon!

Watch this space!

Remember!

Two Days of Concerts
Sunday 15th & Sunday 22nd June
St James's School, Woodside Avenue, N10

Senior Recitals - NEW

Students in our Senior Department will soon have a new opportunity for performance. These recitals will be different in that performers will be able to build a programme of a selection of pieces lasting about 20 minutes, rather than playing a single item in a mixed programme.

Performers will be asked to do some research and provide brief programme notes, and in these days of computer literacy, they can do their own posters too. (One less job for Laura!) These recitals will be by invitation, in consultation with the instrumental teachers, but it is anticipated that in due course most instrumentalists in Y7 and above will have a turn. All will be welcome to fill the audience.

Stephen's Piano Parties

Stephen hosts regular Piano Parties at his house. These are a real celebration of the piano. All pupils play a piece, and so does Stephen.

Often with 30 people in his not-so-big front room, the atmosphere is informal to say the least! Names are drawn out of a hat to decide playing order.

A festive tea follows, where everyone brings a contribution of food and drink (with some very scrumptious cakes!). After tea, there is often a second half to the programme where pupils play another piece.

Valuable performing experience is gained and because of the semi-chaotic nature of these events, the atmosphere is very relaxed. Also, for younger pianists, it is a good opportunity for them to hear more advanced pupils and give them some idea of what they are aiming for. It's also a good social event for all involved!

Concert Reviews

The Concert Reviews at St Michael's Church in Highgate were a huge success again year and there were some outstanding performances. Well done to everyone!

The senior teachers worked flat out to write a report on each performance for each student's following lesson. Students are encouraged to take the comments seriously and use them to help themselves prepare for the next round of concerts in June.



Colourstrings Baby Boom...

Sara Mason left us temporarily a few weeks ago to go on maternity leave for the Summer term. On 17th April she gave birth to a baby boy, **Connor Kai Fan Mason**. According to Andy, he is "6lb 14oz of feeding-machine"!

With *two* Colourstrings teachers as parents, Connor will no doubt receive extra tuition in the *Harry Hare* Department and we expect him to be demonstrating his lungs in a more focussed way than usually expected of children his age. Andy will keep us up to date with all the news, and we are grateful to Anna Wiatr (KG) and David Stratkauskas (Musicianship) for looking after Sara's piano pupils while she is away.



Emma Cornet left us for a second time at the end of the Spring term to prepare for the arrival of a playmate for Eric in July.

Her cheerful presence will be greatly missed but the choir and musicianship classes will be in safe hands with David Stratkauskas, in her absence. (David also directs Enfield Children's Voices so is an experienced choir master.)

We wish both new mums (and dads) well and look forward to seeing them back soon.

Senior Department News

Colourstrings Kindergarten and Kodály Musicianship are still the foundation of everything we do and are what make our school into something really special, as the extra training gives enormous support to the development of every student's instrumental learning. When students 'graduate' to our flourishing Senior Department (normally in Y7 of

instrumental tuition), they continue to have musicianship classes but in a slightly different format, known as the **Advanced Music Course**.

Information about the Senior Department is sent out to all Y5 and Y6 students in advance of their 'graduation'. While some familiar things remain, there are added benefits and provisions and the musicianship curriculum changes significantly. Recitals, concert visits, Grade 5 theory exams (and beyond) all become part of what is offered to this older group of students.

Attendance at the Senior Department Advanced Music Course has been almost 100% over the last two years - a great signal about the enjoyment everyone gets from the classes and a credit to everyone concerned.

Kindergarten

At this time of year, our older Kindergarten pupils have an exciting time as they choose which instrument they want to play in September.

Instrumentalists from Y2-Y3 go to the Kindergarten classes to play to the children and all those who want to can have a turn at playing. After each demonstration, twelve hands go up wanting to learn that instrument, and then the same happens the next week with a different one! Gradually, the children sort out in their minds which instrument appeals to them the most and they are usually quite sure.

Getting it right at this stage is so important and it often takes much deliberation between child, parent and Kindergarten teacher, before the decision is made. The seminar in March will have answered most questions, but any parents who need more help with this decision should speak to their Kindergarten teacher in the first instance or phone the office. Frankie, Laura or Deborah will be pleased to help as necessary.

Double bass

We now have a Double Bass Department! Former cellist Walter Richards took the plunge in January and we are lucky to have Kate Aldridge to teach him. He has already astonished us with his playing at the Concert Reviews in March.

Joke ...

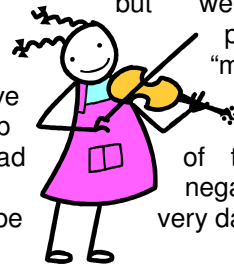
- Q. What do you get if you cross a bear with a kangaroo?**
A. A fur coat with big pockets!

Anyone who is interested in starting the double bass should contact the office. You need to be 6 years plus! Mini-basses are like small cellos and are the foundation sound of the orchestra but are also solo instruments in their own right these days.

We are sure Walter would like to play some duets!

Inspiration...seeing into the future

Being part of a music school like ours has many advantages, but we have been particularly pleased by the culture of "mutual admiration" that we have always tried hard to develop amongst students, instead of the much more common negative rivalry, which can be very damaging.



It is a joy to hear younger children enthusing after a performance by one of our older players, or hearing orchestra members praise another member for a solo well played. This gives such a good feeling on both sides.

This was evident at our recent Concert Reviews and gives the children a glimpse of a "foreseeable" goal. Professional performances and recordings are a wonderful inspiration, too, but a performance by an older child brings things into the child's real world.

The culture of helping each other goes right through: we were delighted that Kimberley Anderson, our most senior 'cellist, chose us for her work experience, and assisted our Kindergarten teachers.

Congratulations go to

Lucie Biek (Y5) for gaining a music place at La Sainte Union for September; **Hugo Lee (Y5)** for gaining a music place at Dame Alice Owen; **Jennifer Baldock (Y5)** for passing her Grade 5 guitar exam; **Zara Mandel (Y3)** for gaining a Distinction in her Grade 2 piano exam; **Lenna Segal (Y3)** for winning a Gold Medal at the North London Festival in the 7 years and Under class; and **Rosie Busiakiewicz (Y10)** for gaining a merit in her Grade 7 piano exam. Very well done.

Lost property ...

Deborah has still 2 violin bows that were left after rehearsals or concerts last year! How can this be?? Who hasn't been practising lately?! There are also several coats and jumpers in the office waiting to be claimed.

Communication...the key to success

Your teachers should be your first port of call, but should you have any worries or concerns about your child's musical education with us, we will do all we can to help. Most problems can be dealt with if caught early, so voice your concerns rather than letting things get into a downward spiral, turning

music into a negative experience. Phone the office to give brief details and Deborah (Principal), Frankie (Head of KG and Musicianship and Deborah's deputy) or Laura (Head of 'Cello and Deborah's deputy) will respond as soon as possible.

Purely social

Music is a very sociable activity and some very Colourstrings. The intervals in the atmosphere.



close friendships are forged through Showcase concerts have a party-like

Are there any parents who would like to **celebrate and encourage this** by joining together to arrange a **social event**? Suggestions so far are a “**bring your own**” picnic or **ice-skating at Alexandra Palace**.

Please email Laura at laura@nlcolourstrings.co.uk if you would like to volunteer or have any good ideas!

Our sincere thanks go to Phil Cavendish, parent of Esme, Anouk and Eden, for his letter, which he has kindly given permission to reproduce below.

A Letter from Phil Cavendish

I have long wanted to thank everyone at North London Colourstrings for the truly wonderful gift of music that you are giving to children: not just to my own children, but to all the children who have the opportunity to study with you. I want to thank the teachers for their patience, professionalism, and passion - they are in every respect fantastic role models; and the organizers, for the many hours of work that they commit every day and week of the year, not only in organizing the family and Showcase concerts, but also in preparing for these concerts; in particular, the invaluable advice that they give to children in the practice sessions that take place beforehand.

One thing I particularly enjoy about Colourstrings is the international profile of the teachers and the rich variety of the music they offer to their pupils. As someone who is not professionally trained as a musician, I have found it hard to find the time to devote to practice and to help my children as they develop musically, but the system of parental involvement not only allows parents to reap the rewards of their children's progress, it also provides a kind of musical education in its own right: music has become part of our family life in way that didn't exist before, and we have all been considerably enriched by it.

When I attend concerts, I feel an extraordinary sense of emotional fulfilment and pleasure at being able to listen to such a rich variety of playing, to see the children developing into marvellous and sensitive musicians, and to observe how they support each other and enjoy each other's achievements. In this increasingly utilitarian and material age, I think this school is giving something of permanent spiritual value to all the children who take part in it. It has been, and continues to be, a truly wonderful experience.

Phil Cavendish, April 2008

Dates for your Diary 2008

Term Ends 14th July (make-up Friday 18th July)

May:

Saturday 10th May

Closing date for New Applications for Instrumental Tuition

Saturday 10th May 10.00-11.00am

Practice Concert - *Muswell Village Club* with Deborah Harris

Saturday 17th May 6.00-8.00pm

Showcase Concert

***Highgate United Reformed Church,
Pond Square, N6***

Tickets £3.50 and £7.50 including drinks and nibbles. Programme to include soloists, the Senior Strings, Senior 'Cello Ensemble, New Training Orchestra, and the Adult Choir.

Friday 23rd May

Closing date for the **Summer Course**

Saturday 31st May

Closing date for re-enrolment of existing students

Half term 26th - 31st May

June:

Saturday 7th June 10.00-11.00am

Practice Concert - *Muswell Village Club* with Laura Forbes

Sunday 15th & Sunday 22nd June

Two Days of Concerts

St James's School, Woodside Avenue, N10

July:

Saturday 5th July 6.00-8.00pm

Showcase Concert

***Highgate United Reformed Church,
Pond Square, N6***

Tickets £3.50 and £7.50 including drinks and nibbles. Programme to include the New Junior Orchestra, Chamber Strings, Senior Guitar Ensemble, Junior 'Cello Ensemble

Summer Course - July

Saturday 26th July - Tuesday 29th July

Children's Summer Course 2008 for students in **Y2 - Y11**

*Greig City Academy,
High Street,
Hornsey,
N8 7NU*

For further dates, please check the website!

www.nicolourstrings.co.uk

Autumn Term begins: Monday 8th September

