



Damian Iorio, Artistic Director

We are finally back with a new newsletter! The last couple of years saw some major changes, with Rowena Taylor taking over from Carol Parker as Administrator. Rowena has been involved with NYSO for many years, first as a student, then as a pastoral assistant and finally as Head of Pastoral. I am delighted to be working with her, and she has settled into her new role with great passion and enthusiasm.

The structural changes that we implemented in 2023 are bearing fruit: we now have four established orchestras for young string players aged 7–21.

This wider age range distinguishes us from other national youth orchestras and enables us to nurture talented young string players from their first ensemble experiences through to a pre-professional level. I feel a great sense of pride when I see how many students we now have, especially during mealtimes when everyone is together. I would like to thank Music Directors Rachel Erdos and Monica Wilkinson for their talent and hard work with the three younger orchestras.

Read on to hear from our Directors and Conductors about what each orchestra got up to this year...



SENIORS



Damian Iorio, Artistic Director, Senior Conductor

My focus, as always, is on the senior orchestra. A considerable number of new players joined the orchestra, and the spring residency gives them time to learn the repertoire and develop their ensemble skills, as well as make connections with each other. The workshop we hold at the end is not a concert, but an opportunity to showcase our work without putting the students under pressure to perform. Serious preparation for the concerts took place

during the summer residency and led to our first performance at the Stamford Arts Centre, with whom we have developed an excellent relationship. After that, we travelled to Herefordshire to perform at the Three Choirs Festival, marking our third appearance at the UK's oldest music festival.

This concert took place at Leominster Priory, a beautiful church with a long history and superb acoustics. It was an unusual experience to have the audience not only in front of us, but also to the sides and behind us, which added to the special atmosphere. In front of a packed church, the orchestra performed the programme — Respighi's Ancient Dances and Airs, Bliss's Music for Orchestra, and Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition — with great energy, musicianship, and enthusiasm. Performing at a major UK festival is a significant achievement for any musician, and I am sure that this will be an unforgettable experience for the orchestra.



Before handing over to the others, I would like to thank the many people who play important roles in making NYSO the success it is. These include the Pastoral Team, who create a wonderful, inclusive atmosphere; Rowena Taylor and Anne-Marie Norman, who work hard behind the scenes; the board, headed by Charles Clark; and the music team, who are fundamental to the musical success of all four orchestras. Thanks also to the staff at Stamford School in Lincolnshire, where we now hold all of our residencies.



"I really enjoyed the rehearsals, such care was taken to deliver the teaching each day, and I noticed the huge impact it had on my technique. I am so thankful to you all for helping make this so accessible for me. I learnt what it means to really commit to playing intensively for a long period of time. I feel as if NYSO instilled a lot of confidence within my playing, and I was able to produce some of the best sounds from my instrument, as it was such a supportive and encouraging environment to work on improving my playing."

"Some of my favourite moments from the residency were the little moments that made everything feel special - whether it be figuring out challenging repertoire together with our incredible tutor, or sharing a laugh with some friends during lunch or breaks, or the awe-inspiring atmosphere that filled the room during our performance in the Three Choirs Festival. The atmosphere was always friendly and it was just so lovely to be surrounded by people who were just as, or more passionate and committed as I am."

Plans for next year are almost finalised and includes an invitation for the senior orchestra to perform at another major festival. See you in 2026!



CAMERATA

Leon Bosch, Camerata Conductor

Camerata Residency Reflections - Unearthing Hidden Gems with the Camerata

Spending a week with the Camerata during the National Youth String Orchestra's summer residency in Stamford once again proved both rewarding and energising. The musicians continually justify the confidence we place in them, rising to even the most complex challenges with focus, imagination, and commitment.

This year's programme took us off the beaten track, exploring vibrant string serenades by Oscar Straus and Dag Wirén, alongside lyrical miniatures by Bottesini and Puccini. Each piece opened new doors for the players, stretching them both technically and musically.

Straus's Serenade, virtually unknown today, was a delightful discovery not only for the Camerata but also for their tutors. Across its five movements, Straus brings a Viennese elegance infused with charm, wit, and gentle irony. The work demanded a lightness of touch and refined phrasing, a challenge the players embraced with confidence and imagination.

Wirén's four-movement Serenade for Strings, while not entirely neglected, remains too rarely performed. With its rhythmic drive, taut structure, Scandinavian clarity and understated humour, it tested the Camerata's ability to combine precision with sparkle: to sustain energy and vitality without ever slipping into mechanical rigidity.



By contrast, Bottesini's Andante sostenuto offered the chance to inhabit the world of Romantic bel canto, unfolding long, singing lines with warmth and sensitivity. Puccini's Crisantemi, meanwhile, drew the players into its restrained expression of grief. Their performance carried special resonance, as it was offered in honour of my running coach, Cliff King, who had passed away suddenly only days earlier. The Camerata played with sincerity and integrity, capturing the sombre beauty of Puccini's masterpiece.



Championing unjustly neglected music has been a lifelong passion of mine. Introducing young players to such works, alongside the great classics, broadens their horizons and deepens their artistry. It also enriches the cultural fabric of our society, ensuring that music of lasting value is not forgotten.

"I learnt so many valuable lessons about musicianship from the wonderful coaches and conductors and gained confidence in my leadership skills. The classes in Dalcroze and Kodály also introduced me to new approaches to learning music."

"I have made so many wonderful friends thanks to the residency and truly cherish that, as nothing is complete without the right people by your side."

What I hoped to share with the Camerata through this unusual and diverse programme went far beyond technical mastery, ensemble discipline, or stylistic understanding. My aim was to kindle in them a deeper sense of musical purpose - one that will sustain and inspire them throughout their lives.



SINFONIA

Rachel Erdos, Camerata & Sinfonia Director, Sinfonia Conductor

NYSO Sinfonia 2025 was a whirlwind of musical magic; designed to stretch, challenge, and celebrate the talents of our brilliant young string players.

Guided by our team of passionate tutors, the students dived into full string orchestra rehearsals, sectionals to fine-tune their craft and explored the intimacy and nuance of chamber music in mini orchestras.



We enjoyed daily choir sessions, Kodály musicianship using solfège, rhythm work and inner hearing exercises based on our year's repertoire and Dalcroze Eurhythmics using movement to internalize rhythm and phrasing and expressing the music through the whole body. Viola Club made a triumphant return, luring curious violinists (and others) into the mysterious world of the alto clef, whilst the cello and bass ensemble had the chance to enjoy chamber repertoire.

Sinfonia tackled a vibrant and contrasting program that showcased the orchestra's versatility. Farkas' Piccola Musica di Concerto offered rhythmic complexity and harmonic richness, challenging the ensemble's precision and musical maturity.



A concerto for two double basses, adapted from a Handel trio sonata, gave the brilliant Norah Nip and Summer Sobczak a rare and virtuosic spotlight. Their performances were an absolute triumph!



We transformed our Rossini overture to *il Signor Bruschino* into a semi-staged mini-opera, crafted by the students themselves, allowing for storytelling, character development, and a joyful synthesis of music and drama. For me, it did involve wearing a wig (and that was a cushion underneath my shirt!) and having to fall asleep loudly onto my music stand.



Over the two residencies I witnessed remarkable growth—not only in the technical ability of the players, but in musical sensitivity, ensemble awareness, creative expression and real collaboration and teamwork. The final performances were a testament to their hard work, leaving both participants and audiences inspired by the power of collective music-making.



"I learnt so much, especially in Kodaly and Dalcroze, both of which helped me immensely with the 5/8 time signature, and gave me a better sense of pulse."

SINFONIETTA

Monica Wilkinson, Sinfonietta Director

The youngest of the NYSO orchestras in every sense, Sinfonietta has continued to grow and develop through its fifth and sixth residencies this year. It is exciting to see many of our original members playing with Sinfonia, and one even in Camerata already.

Having the children with us for such a short time means that choosing appropriate repertoire is crucial. We need something that can be learned quickly and then mined deeply. In spring we worked on Beethoven's Eroica Symphony; well, 16 bars of it...! Just like Beethoven, we introduced the bass line first then added the melody. Adelaide led some beautiful creative work based on roots (bass line) and blooms (melody). We were particularly pleased that Beethoven himself was able to appear with us in our workshop!

In the summer, we learned Britten's arrangement of the song Old Abram Brown as a basis for our exploration of the natural minor scale. Drawing on other elements of the course including creative work and a Moomin

bedtime story, we created a misty forest soundscape in which every member of the orchestra improvised a solo using this scale. Quite magical!



"I loved the 'quiet down' sessions in the evenings, when we could really get to know each other and enjoy some story time. Beyond the music, I have made lots of friends who also as passionate about music as I am. We all said we will be there again next year."



We also performed Hallfiter's delightful Habanera with Sinfonia, learning specially composed parts initially by ear, then performing with sheet music in what was a first for Sinfonietta. Whilst learning by ear, developing inner hearing and embedding basic ensemble skills remain at the core of this course, working with sheet music was a successful experiment which may be repeated.

Monica, Kim and Anita were joined for the first time by Cathy who came along to support our three bass players. We were all struck by how much these young people achieve in such a very short time and are exploring ways in which we can develop the residency to maximise impact.

"Some of my favourite memories are from the times when the whole orchestra really came together, and suddenly everything just clicked, it felt amazing to be part of that sound.

I feel I've learnt so much during the residencies, not just about playing better and feeling more confident, but also about listening, working as a team, and supporting each other. The tutors and conductors really pushed me in a good way, and I've come home feeling inspired to keep practising and improving."



"[My child] loved the freedom to 'hear' the music without the distraction of notes on a page - an experience I do not believe many musicians get. The 'shoes off and minds open' approach holds an incredible power to properly engage in music and the senses that was evident in the concert"



2025 TEAM

A huge thank you to everyone who has been involved in this year's NYSO residencies and concerts, with particular thanks to this year's wonderful coaching, pastoral and administration teams, who work tirelessly before and during the residencies to create our magical NYSO atmosphere for everyone involved.

Senior Music Team

Damian Iorio - Artistic Director, Conductor
Simon Smith - Violin
Enrico Alvares - Violin
Alex Thorndike - Viola
Gillian Thoday - Cello
Ben Russell - Double Bass

Sinfonietta Music Team

Monica Wilkinson - Sinfonietta
Director, Dalcroze
Kim Vaughan - Lower Strings
Adelaide Carlow - Creative
Anita Memmott - Creative

Camerata & Sinfonia Music Team

Rachel Erdos - Camerata & Sinfonia Director,
Sinfonia Conductor
Leon Bosch - Camerata Conductor
Theo Vinden - Camerata Guest Conductor,
Residency Assistant
John Crawford - Violin
Celia Waterhouse - Violin
Vanessa Gaidoni - Viola
Rebecca Leyton-Smith - Cello
Cathy Elliot - Double Bass
Holger Aston - Kodaly
Rebecca Spencer - Dalcroze

Pastoral Team

Rowena Taylor - Director
Caroline Blair - Team Leader
Katie Kim Hackman - Team Leader

Lara Agar
Emily Clark
Eva Gaidoni
Lloyd Hampton
Isabel Irvine
Tomo Kimura
Harry Nim

Stephen Nurse
Isabella Pincombe
Callum Sherriff
Rebecca Thorp
Cai Waverley-Hudson
Taran Waverley-Hudson
Ellen Wilkinson

A special thank you also goes to our Trustees, for supporting our music-making every step of the way.



THANK YOU!