

A photograph of St Donat's Castle in Wales, featuring its iconic towers and stone walls, partially obscured by bare trees in the foreground.

NATIONAL STRINGS SUMMER COURSES 2025

AT ST DONAT'S CASTLE, WALES

11-14TH AUG

**Senior Masterclass and
Chamber Music Academy**

10-13TH AUG

**Intermediate Solo, Chamber
Music and Orchestra Course**

10-12TH AUG

**Junior Solo, Chamber Music
and Orchestra Course**

24-26TH AUG

**Violin & Viola Solo Course in
South of France**

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About National Strings

National Strings was founded in 2009 to give young string players opportunities to study with some of the finest Professors. Courses combine solo performance opportunities, masterclasses with leading teachers and playing chamber music with other students. Each day includes a private lesson, rehearsal with an accompanist, chamber music coaching and the opportunity to perform in the evening concert. The course is tailored to the needs of each individual student. Our range of courses foster string players from some of their first chamber music rehearsals and performances to the most promising conservatoire students and young professionals.



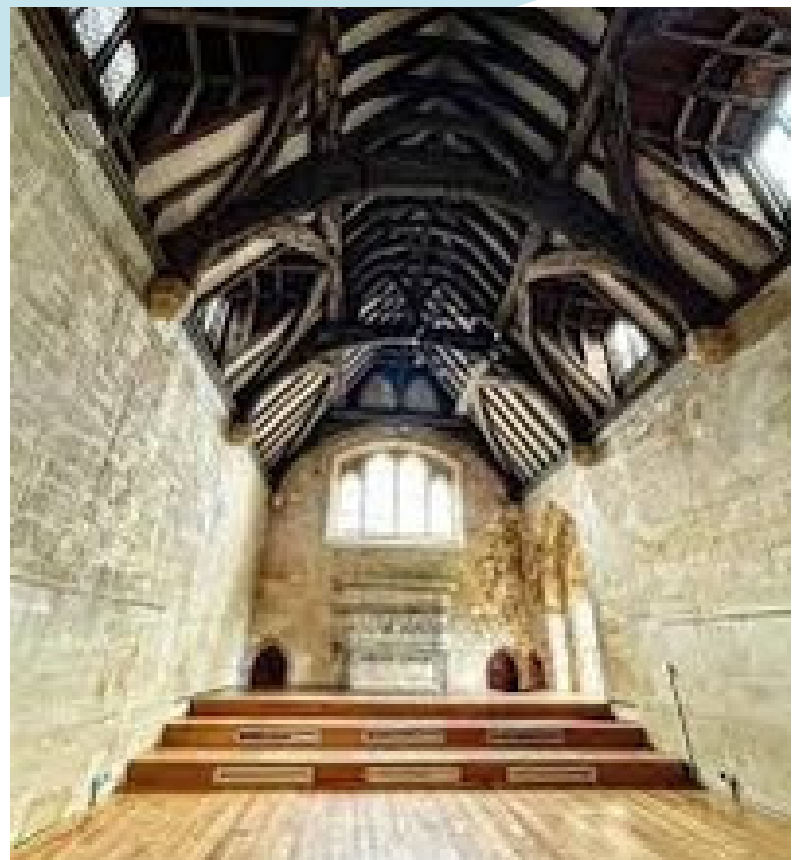
FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE WWW.NATIONALSTRINGS.ORG

Venue

St Donat's Castle, Atlantic College



UWC Atlantic is located at St Donat's Castle, a 12th-century castle near the town of Llantwit Major on the South Wales coast, overlooking the Bristol Channel. The castle has been continuously inhabited since it was first built. The extensive grounds also include the 12th-century St Donat's Church and the historic terraced gardens, as well as preserved woodland, farmland and Heritage Coastline. St Donat's Castle is the main building of the college, housing the Tudor great hall, the gothic dining hall, Bradenstoke Hall which will be our performance venue. It is accessible by train from Bridgend or Cardiff.



Meet Our Professors

Vanessa David – Course Director

Violin and Viola

Principal 1st violin with Royal Ballet Sinfonia, which she has led at venues such as the Barbican and Symphony Hall and is mentoring scheme co-ordinator. In her freelance career she has guest led National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, London City Ballet, Welsh Chamber Orchestra and London Concertante; co-led the Ulster Orchestra, English chamber Orchestra and Bournemouth

Sinfonietta; worked with Academy of St. Martin's in the Fields and ROH. Broadcast as a soloist on Radio 3, Radio Wales, BBC Wales & HTV. She teaches at Junior Guildhall and coaches many youth orchestras and has given masterclasses for Birmingham Conservatoire and orchestral workshops at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Royal Academy of Music where she also runs the RBS Scheme.



Visiting Violin Masterclass

Lesley Hatfield - Seniors

Lesley Hatfield leads a varied musical life, combining her role as Concertmaster of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales with chamber music, solo playing and teaching as a professor at RWCMD. Prior to leading BBC NOW she was co-Leader of the Northern Sinfonia and Leader of the Ulster Orchestra. She is a member of the highly acclaimed Gaudier Ensemble and is regularly invited to participate as a guest in a wide range of ensembles and chamber music festivals.



Clare Thompson, Violin - Seniors & Intermediates

For over a decade, she was Sub-Leader at the Philharmonia Orchestra. A longstanding Professor at TrinityLaban Conservatoire, she is also a Professor at the Junior Royal Academy of Music. Passionate about training young people, she has been a regular tutor for the National Children's Orchestras of GB since 2004 and was recently made an Interim Trustee. She also appeared as guest leader with the Royal Opera House, London Mozart Players, and principal positions with the London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra to name a few. An active chamber musician, she has recorded and broadcast widely. She was recently made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music for her services to music.



Sebastian See-Schierenberg, Violin - Intermediates & Juniors

Sebastian is a British German-Chinese concert violinist, teacher, competition adjudicator, chamber music coach and orchestral conductor has been active in the Asia region for over 20 years and is a much sought after teacher there. He is now based in Cardiff where he teaches at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama but still travels regularly to Asia. Many of his previous violin students are prize winners of International competitions particularly in the Asia region and have won scholarships to study at renowned music schools around the world. He has recorded for Signum Classics, his disc 'Sounds of Spain and the Americas' achieving much success.



Jon Thorne, Viola - Seniors

Jon Thorne is a Viola and Chamber Music Professor at the Academy and previously he taught viola at the Royal College of Music. Jon is a member the acclaimed Oculi Ensemble and has played with many of the major orchestras in the UK and currently holds the position of Principal Viola with the Oxford Philharmonic. He is also a regular guest principal with The LPO, English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. After graduating he formed the Bronte String Quartet, Prizewinners at both the Royal Over-Seas League and the Cremona International Quartet Competitions, they played at venues such as London's Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room. Jon then joined the Badke Quartet in 2009 and played with them at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Kings Place and the Concertgebouw and broadcast on BBC R3, Classic Fm and on French National Radio and TV. Jon has appeared as a juror for competitions including the Tertis Competition, The Royal Overseas League Chamber Music Competition, Windsor Festival International String Competition, The Parkhouse Award and North London Festival.



Alex Thorndike, Viola - Seniors & Intermediates

Alex currently divides his time between performing as Assistant Principal Viola of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and teaching at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. As well as teaching at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Alex is a Specialist Viola teacher at Wells Cathedral school – one of four specialised Music schools in the UK. Alex is also coaches the viola section of the National Youth String Orchestra. He previously played for the Halle Orchestra before moving to his present position at BBC NOW.



Nicholas Britton Trygstad, Cello - Seniors & Intermediates

Head of Strings at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Nicholas Britton Trygstad is a seasoned performer who also taught cello for 15 years at the Royal Northern College of Music. A native of Minnesota USA, he came to the UK to study at the RNCM with Hannah Roberts and Ralph Kirshbaum. Upon completion of his studies he was offered the position of Principal Cello with the Orchestra of Scottish Opera and soon afterwards became Principal Cello of the Hallé



William Bruce, Cello - Intermediates & Juniors

William Bruce is Head of Strings at Junior Guildhall, a passionate music educator, William is much in demand in the UK for masterclasses, workshops, summer schools and insets and he ran a residential summer school for cellists each year. In addition to many years experience as an adjudicator, William is a Consultant Moderator for the ABRSM. He studied with Christopher Bunting and took part in classes with Jacqueline du Pré and William Pleeth. He also attended chamber music courses at the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies with the Amadeus Quartet. He has been a visiting professor at the University of South Carolina and was a member of the orchestra of English National Opera since 1982.



Rebeca Selley, Piano and Accompaniment - Seniors & Intermediates

Rebecca studied piano and piano accompaniment at the Royal College of Music where she won the John Ireland Prize for accompanists, and played for masterclasses given by, amongst others, William Pleeth, Dorothy Delay and Benjamin Luxon. More recently she has played in masterclasses for such eminent musicians as Maxim Vengerov, James Ehnes, Dong-Suk Kang, Roger Chase, Simon Rowland Jones, Alban Gerhardt, Thomas Carroll, Boris Garlitsky, Rachel Podger and Pamela Frank. She has given piano trio recitals with The Vale Piano Trio and is a regular pianist in the BBC NOW chamber series. She has made frequent appearances at the Wales Millennium Centre, including accompanying competitors of the Menuhin Competition. Rebecca also works as an accompanist for BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Welsh National Opera and Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama.



Louisa Lam, Piano and Accompaniment - Intermediates & Juniors

Louisa has performed as soloist and accompanist in many venues across London including the Barbican Hall, Wigmore Hall, Southwark Cathedral, St James Piccadilly and St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, as well as further afield, including the Auditori Winterhur in Barcelona and Musica Eboræ in Portugal. She is currently a staff accompanist at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (both Senior and Junior departments), répétiteur for the St John of Jerusalem Festival Chorus in Hackney, and she teaches piano at Christ's Hospital School in West Sussex, as well as having a thriving private teaching practice in London.



Catherine Miledge, Piano and Accompaniment - Intermediates & Juniors

Catherine was born in Monmouthshire. She studied Classics and English at Jesus College, Oxford and after graduating with a first joined the Piano Accompaniment course at Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she received a distinction for her post-graduate diploma, and subsequently a MMus degree in performance as a solo pianist. She went on to win the Birmingham Accompanist of the Year award in 2001 as well as prizes for accompaniment in the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition and the Royal Overseas League. She has given recitals in venues including Wigmore Hall and the Purcell Room as well as for music festivals and societies around the country. Recordings include CDs with bassoonist Meyrick Alexander and saxophonist Amy Dickson and she has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. Now living in Cardiff, Catherine works as an accompanist at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama as well as teaching piano at Cardiff University. She also undertakes occasional freelance work for WNO and BBCNOW.



Senior Masterclass and Chamber Music Academy

11-14th August 2025

Who can apply?

The senior course is suitable for conservatoire students/recent graduates or younger students of an advanced standard who play violin, viola, cello, double bass or piano.

Senior Course Program

Senior courses include a one-to-one lesson, a rehearsal session with an accompanist each day, as well as each student participating in 2-3 chamber music groups. The concerts that happen every evening act as opportunities to try out repertoire and gain performance practice. Other opportunities can be organised to suit the needs of each student such as excerpt classes and rehearsing solos with string orchestra accompaniment. Some students may be chosen to play to visiting masterclass professors.

Fees

Residential - £558

Non-residential - £528

How to Apply

Email Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com with the applicants; Name, Age, Instrument, Biography or CV and links to two contrasting video recordings by 15th June.



Intermediate Solo, Chamber Music and Orchestra Course

10-13th August 2025

Who can apply?

The Intermediate course is suitable for young string players of grade 8 standard and beyond and pianist of diploma standard and above.

Intermediate Course Program

The Intermediate course aims to give a basis in Solo and chamber music playing and build performance confidence. The first day of the course will be a string orchestra workshop day with students on the Junior Course led by Sebastian See-Schierenberg whose experience at conducting young musicians across the globe will create an opportunity for string players to learn the skills to play with others. There will also be the chance to rehearse with piano on the first day and perform in the first night concert but students are able to join the course from the second day should they wish to. They will then receive a one-to-one lesson, a rehearsal with piano and play in 1-2 chamber groups each day, as well as play in the concert each evening.

Fees

Residential - £495 (£420*)

Non-residential - £465 (£390*)

- without orchestra workshop day and first concert

How to Apply

Email Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com with the applicants; Name, Age, Instrument, Biography or CV and links to two contrasting video recordings by 15th June.



JUNIOR COURSE

10-12th August 2025

Program

On the Junior Course each young string player plays in multiple chamber music groups and will have a lesson and a rehearsal with piano each day as well as perform in concerts every evening. The first day will be a string orchestra workshop day led by Sebastian See-Schierenberg whose experience at conducting young musicians across the globe and will be a chance for students to get to know each other.

Who Can Apply

Any Violinists, Violist, Cellists or Bassists of grade 6-7 Standard. Priority will be given to those who registered first.

Fee

£360

Meals Included

How to Apply

Email

Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com
with the applicants; Name, Age
and a recent video recording
by 15th June



National Strings

Violin & Viola Course

24-26th August 2025

National Strings was founded in 2009 to give young string players opportunities to study with some of the finest Professors. On the Violin & Viola Intensive Course each player will have a lesson with National Strings Director, Vanessa David and a rehearsal with pianist, Rebecca Selley each day. Students will be placed in a suitable chamber music group and concerts to perform in. For young string players grade 6+, we may take some grade 5 students if space available.

STAFF

COURSE DIRECTOR - VANESSA DAVID

Principal 1st violin with Royal Ballet Sinfonia, which she has led at venues such as the Barbican and Symphony Hall and is mentoring scheme co-ordinator. She has been broadcast as a soloist on Radio 3, Radio Wales, BBC Wales & HTV. She teaches at Junior Guildhall and coaches many youth orchestras and has coached and given masterclasses for the Royal Academy of Music and Birmingham Conservatoire.

PIANO/ACCOMPANIST - REBECCA SELLEY

Rebecca studied piano and piano accompaniment at the Royal College of Music where she won the John Ireland Prize for accompanists. Recently she has played in masterclasses for such eminent musicians such as Maxim Vengerov, James Ehnes and Rachel Podger. Rebecca also works as an accompanist for BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Welsh National Opera and Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama.



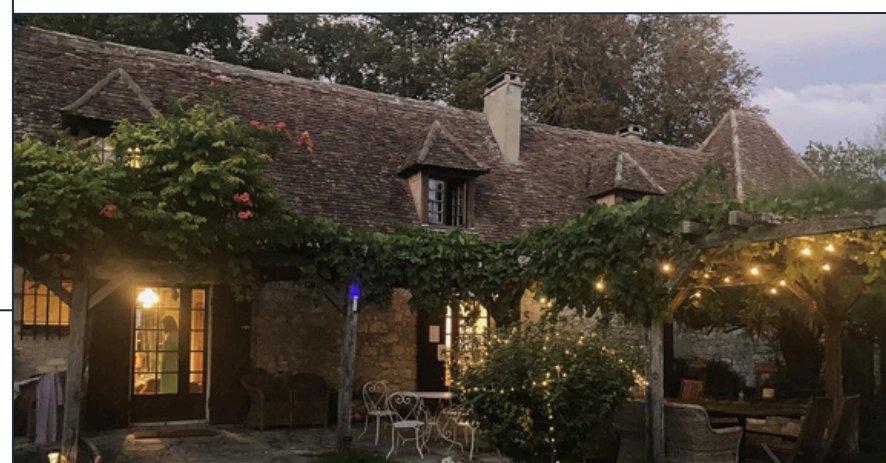
VENUE

The course will be held at the beautiful Manoir Du Suquet just outside the village of Issigeac, France. You can book to stay as a family or as an individual student and all guests will have access to the extensive grounds, swimming pool and tennis courts.

PARTICIPATION FEE:

£365

*INCLUDING MEALS
ACCOMMODATION BOOKED DIRECTLY
WITH MANIOR DU SUQUET*



EMAIL US AT NATIONALSTRINGSCOURSE@GMAIL.COM
TO SIGN UP

