



# NATIONAL STRINGS SUMMER COURSES 2026

*AT CLIFTON COLLEGE, BRISTOL*

22<sup>ND</sup> - 25<sup>TH</sup> AUG

**Senior Masterclass and  
Chamber Music Academy**

22<sup>ND</sup> - 25<sup>TH</sup> AUG

**Intermediate Solo and  
Chamber Course**

20<sup>TH</sup> - 21<sup>ST</sup> AUG

**Junior Solo and Chamber  
Music Course**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**03**

**About National Strings**

**04**

**Visiting and Resident Professors**

**12**

**Senior Masterclass and Chamber Music Academy**

**13**

**Intermediate Solo and Chamber Music Course**

**14**

**Junior Solo and Chamber Music Course**

# About National Strings

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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 performers and playing chamber music with other students and staff. 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](http://WWW.NATIONALSTRINGS.ORG)

# 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 orchestral classes at the Royal Academy of Music, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Birmingham Conservatoire and teaching workshops at Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

## Visiting 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.



## Visiting Masterclass



### **Sergey Levitin - Seniors**

Sergey Levitin is an internationally acclaimed violinist and concertmaster, known for his artistry and leadership. Since 2004, he has led the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, as concertmaster. At just 23, he was appointed Concertmaster of the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra by Valery Gergiev, touring globally and contributing to major recordings with Philips Classics and Decca. He is the founder of the Chamber Principals of London. He is a sought-after guest concertmaster for leading orchestras, including the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

## Visiting Masterclass



### **Rebecca Chambers - Seniors & Intermediates**

Bekki Chambers is principal viola of the English National Opera Orchestra. Before joining ENO she was a member of the Philharmonia Orchestra and the BBC Symphony orchestra. Bekki is in demand as guest principal with many leading UK orchestras including, LPO, RBO, RPO, BBCNOW, BSO, ECO and the London Mozart Players. She is a keen chamber musician and was a member of the Tippett quartet. As a teacher Bekki has a wide experience coaching viola sections and individual teaching including as a visiting teacher at the Royal College of Music.



### **Carol Paige, Violin - Seniors & Intermediates**

Carol Paige has been a member of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for 18 years and is the Principal 2nd Violin. She is also in demand as a guest principal for other orchestras and has played Principal 2nd violin for the CBSO, BBC NOW, Northern Sinfonia, RLPO, WNO and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Carol began playing the violin at the age of 7. She achieved a first class honours degree in Music at Cardiff University and then completed postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded the prestigious dipRAM award for an outstanding final recital. She is a keen chamber musician collaborating with other leading performers.



### **Simon Smith, Violin - Seniors & Intermediates**

For two decades Simon taught in UK Conservatoires - the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, the Royal Northern College of Music, and Trinity Laban in London. He is currently Head of Strings at Wells Cathedral School, one of the UK's specialist music schools. For many years he was also a violin teacher and chamber music coach in the Royal College of Music Junior Department. He has been active as a soloist, chamber musician and teacher worldwide for 30 years. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras such as the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, the Philharmonia, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic



## **Rafael Todes, Violin - Seniors & Intermediates**

Rafael Todes is a British violinist whose career has centred on chamber music and education. After studying with Sheila Nelson, Yfrah Neaman and Jack Glickman, he established himself as a leading chamber musician, first with the Schidlof String Quartet and later as second violinist of the Allegri Quartet. With the Allegri, he has performed widely in Britain and internationally, combining the classical quartet repertoire with the promotion of contemporary music through numerous premières and commissions. Alongside performing, Todes has devoted much of his career to teaching. He is Professor of Violin at the Junior Academy of the Royal Academy of Music and for many years was Director of the Senior Course at Pro Corda.



## **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.



## **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.



## **Carys Barnes, Viola - Juniors**

Carys Barnes is an experienced Orchestra Principal and Chamber musician performing across Europe. She has played Principal Viola with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Royal Ballet Sinfonia, Slovak State Sinfonietta and had a temporary contract as Principal Viola with Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, Denmark. She has given chamber concerts with the Pro Musica Ensemble in Aalborg including with Stephan Dohr, the principal horn of the Berlin Philharmonic. She is on trial for Principal Viola with The Hallé and Co-Principal Viola at the London Philharmonic Orchestra and English National Opera and currently holds the Sub-Principal Viola position with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Carys is a Hattori Artist for 2025-2027. As a soloist she has performed at venues such as the Foundling Museum, Leicester Cathedral and Southwell Festival. She is a deputy violin and viola teacher at JGSMD and JRAM.



### **Jolly Koos, Cello - Seniors & Intermediates**

Joely has established herself as a versatile and compelling performer, pursuing a varied musical career as a soloist, orchestral musician and chamber musician. Performing as Principal with the English Symphony Orchestra, and co-principal with the City of London Sinfonia and the London Chamber Orchestra, she also plays as guest principal with several orchestras including London Sinfonietta, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and BBC Philharmonic. For the last twenty years Joely has very much enjoyed being professor of Cello at Trinity Laban Conservatoire as well as teaching at Eton College. She is a co-founder and tutor of "Cello Dynamo" - a residential course for young cellists - and is regularly invited to give masterclasses at the London Cello Society.



### **William Bruce, Cello - Seniors, 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 & Juniors**

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.



### **Edward Leung, Piano and Accompaniment - Seniors & Intermediates**

American pianist Edward Leung is a sought-after soloist and chamber musician. Edward is a 2025-2027 Making Music Recommended Artist and a Bösendorfer-Amadeus Young Artist, and was recently named a Rising Star of the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival. His debut album with violinist Usha Kapoor Beach critically acclaimed by BBC Music Magazine and, Gramophone. After studies at Princeton University and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Edward is currently the Staff Pianist at The Yehudi Menuhin School. He gives masterclasses internationally and has previously taught at the Junior Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Westminster School.



### **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.



### **James Drinkwater, Piano and Accompaniment - Intermediates & Juniors**

James is Director of Music at Clifton College's Upper School and is an experienced accompanist and organist. He has accompanied young string players in category finals at BBC Young Musician and at the Wigmore Hall. He has given solo organ recitals at venues including Truro and Bristol Cathedrals, Exeter College Oxford and St Mary's Redcliffe. He is a graduate of Pembroke College Cambridge and a prize-winning fellow of the Royal College of Organists.

# Senior Masterclass and Chamber Music Academy

22-25th August 2026

## 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 - £565

Non-residential - £528

## How to Apply

Email [Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com](mailto:Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com) with the applicants; Name, Age, Instrument, Biography or CV and links to two contrasting video recordings by 29th June.

We are grateful to Florian Leonhard Violins for their support of financial assistance to some of our deserving students.



# Intermediate Solo and Chamber Music Course

22-25th August 2026

## 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. Students will receive a one-to-one lesson, a rehearsal with piano and play in 1-2 chamber groups each day, as well as the opportunity to play in the concert each evening. They will also be encouraged to watch masterclasses on the senior course when not in sessions.

## Fees

Residential - £565

Non-residential - £528



## How to Apply

Email [Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com](mailto:Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com) with the applicants; Name, Age, Instrument, Biography or CV and links to two contrasting video recordings by 29th June.

# JUNIOR COURSE

20th & 21st August 2026

## 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.

## Who Can Apply

Any Violinists, Violist, Cellists or Bassists of grade 5-8 Standard. Priority will be given to those who registered first.

## How to Apply

Email

Nationalstringscourse@gmail.com with the applicants; Name, Age and a recent video recording by 29th June

## Fee

Residential-£298

Non-Residential-£275





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