

COLOURSTRINGS INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL – JULY 2012

**NJNF recipient Laura Seddon**

I recently had the privilege of attending the Colourstrings 23rd International Teacher Training Course through the help of the Nannie Jamieson Nutshell Fund, and what an exhaustingly inspiring week it was! Geza and Csaba Szilvay are two of the most wonderfully charismatic men I have had the fortune to come across during my first few years of teaching, and what they don't know about the art of Pedagogy isn't worth knowing.

Yes, the Colourstrings concept might seem a bit farfetched to those who haven't encountered it fully yet, but those people should most definitely attend this course before making any steadfast opinions. The fact that 'Colourstrings' is a concept and not a 'method' is actually one of the most fundamental things to know, as this definitely affected my outlook on the Szilvay brothers' material and ideas. Yes, Colourstrings is aimed at particularly young beginners, grabbing them at the very early stages of their musical development, in order to then entice and develop; them through the fun and less-regimented

aspects of playing an instrument. However, what these young learners are expected (and able) to do within their first few years of learning is quite incredible. The material that the brothers use within their teaching covers all aspects of string playing, from harmonics in all positions to freedom of shifting, and from string crossings and complex bowings to sound and musicality. Through the use of songs learnt in Kindergarten, the children can learn a huge variety of these seemingly tricky string techniques in a fun and fearless way, setting them up for a superb string playing experience.

It is not my place to explain step by step what the Colourstrings concept entails...you will have to attend a course for that! But I would like to mention a few ideas that I have come away with, which I know will help and inspire my teaching, whether it be specifically Colourstrings-taught pupils or not.

■ **Singing!** – We should all be singing during our teaching...it develops the ear as well as musicality. Singing in solfa in conjunction with their playing can help a child's intonation no-end.

Hearing the notes – Csaba talks about the 'heat' of a really in-tune note...getting a child to learn to centre their intonation is so important, and this is developed in Colourstrings through the use of the pentatonic scale.

■ **Hearing the harmonies** – Pairing together folk melodies that are various different intervals apart and performing them as duets, playing melodies in canon, and eventually singing and playing two different parts simultaneously...these all develop the child's listening and hearing skills, as well as helping to develop secure intonation.

■ **Transposition of melodies**, as well as transforming them into modal tonalities – This helps to develop a huge variety of string techniques, including learning different positions, extensions, thumb position...the list goes on. And what is so brilliant is that all these techniques are encountered in an enjoyable and fearless way, through the use of folk songs from all around the world.

■ **The fundamental concept of freedom** – Experimenting is such great fun and we should encourage all of our pupils to develop this skill in order to enhance their musical learning experience.

I'd like to finish by saying that there is nothing more inspiring than watching the Szilvay brothers' video clips of their students in Helsinki. I have never seen such talented youngsters, and it is a real awakening to how well the method is working over there. It has definitely persuaded me to use and experiment with much more of the Colourstrings material and ideas. After all, music is all about getting to know and love your instrument, and the Colourstrings concept certainly enables us to achieve this. LAURA SEDDON